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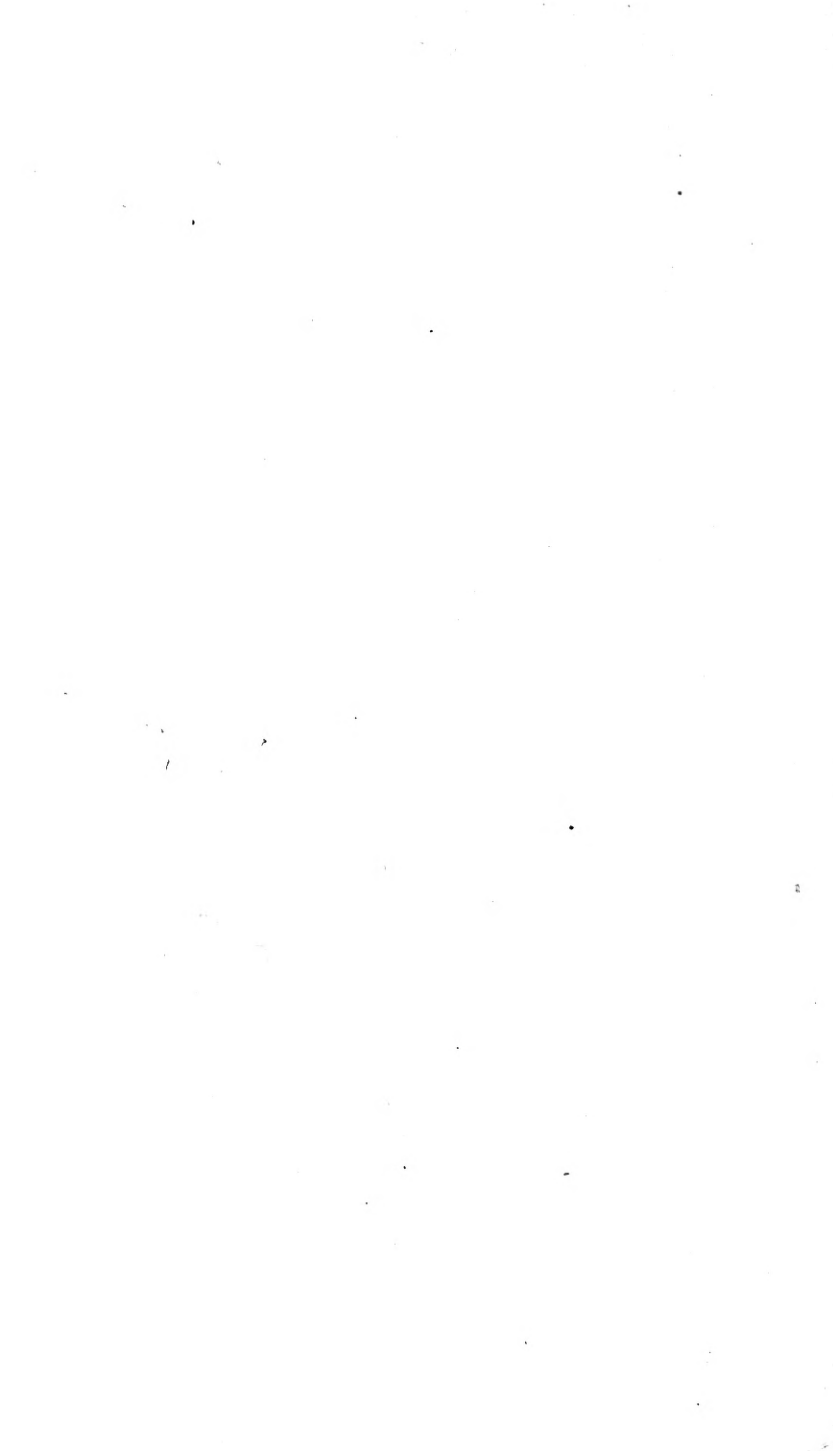
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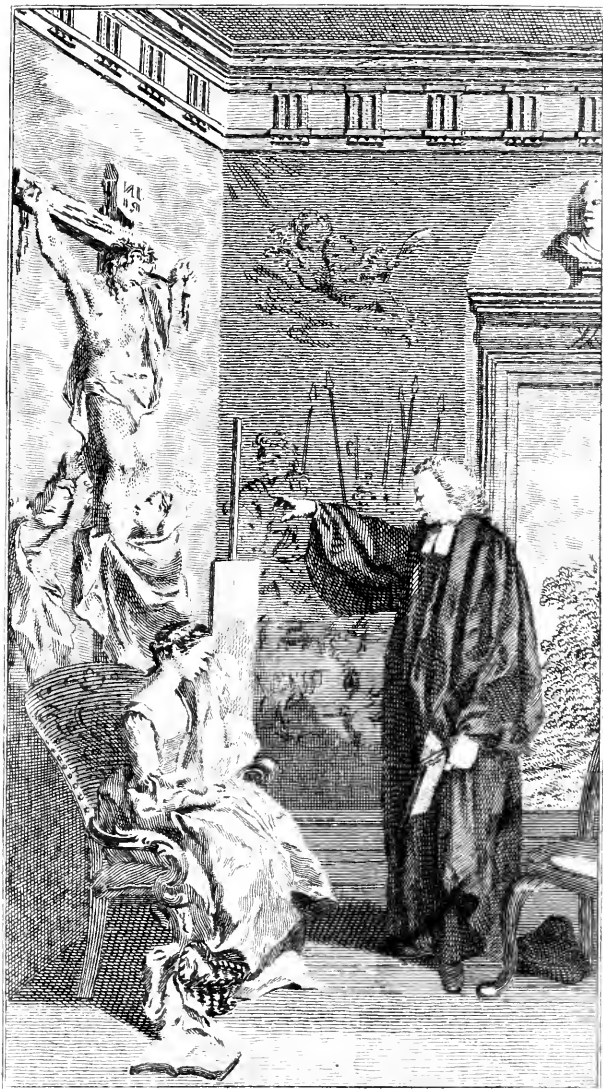
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*Goussier del et sculp.*

# C O M F O R T

FOR THE

# A F F L I C T E D,

Under every DISTRESS.

WITH

## SUITABLE DEVOTIONS.

---

By WILLIAM DODD, M.A.  
Prebendary of BRECON, and Chaplain to the Lord  
Bishop of ST. DAVID'S.

---

*Comfort ye, comfort ye my People, saith your GOD: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem.* Isaiah xl. 1.

*Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak Hands: Thy Words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble Knees.*  
Job iv. 3, 4.

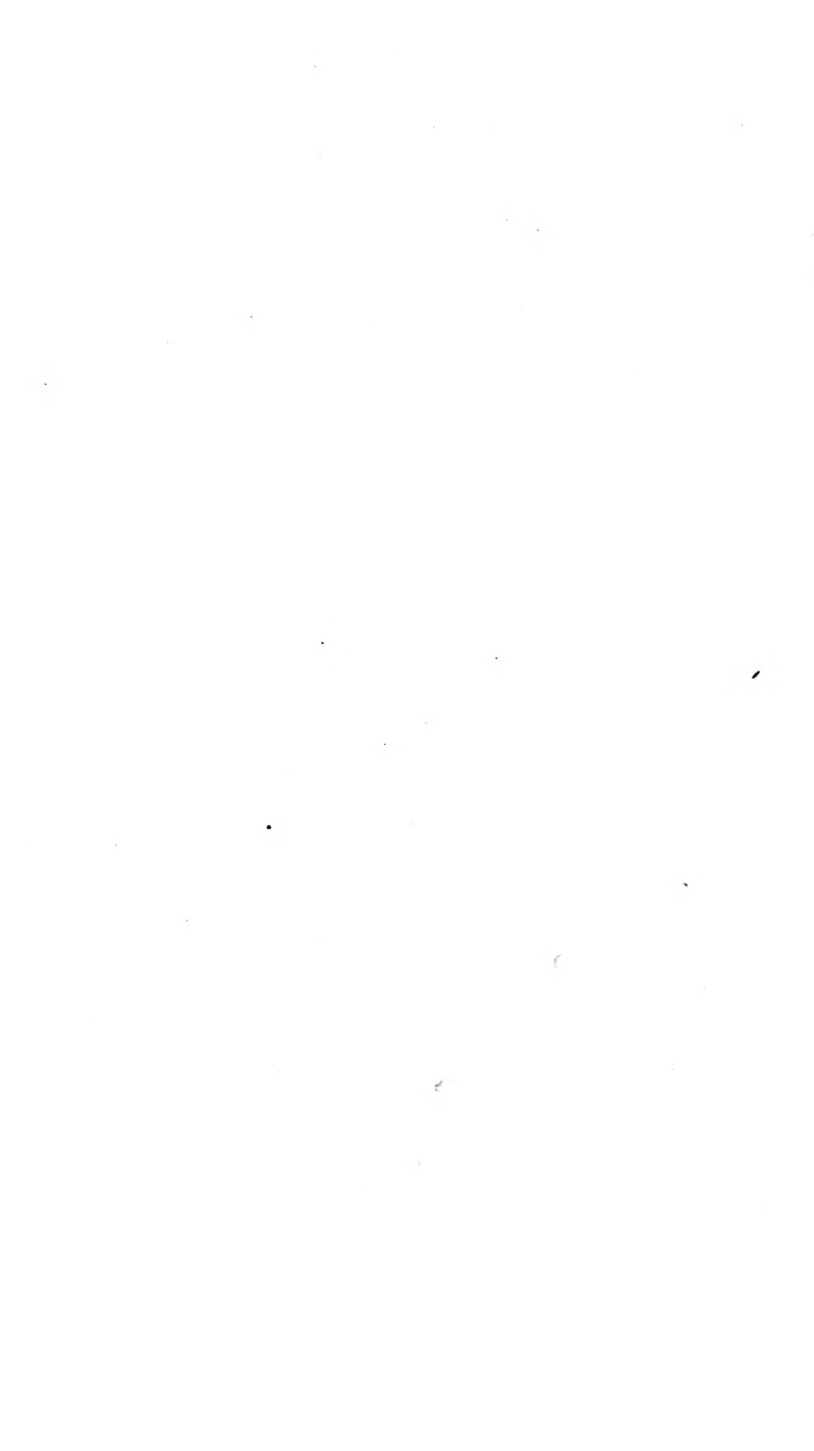
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MDCCLXIV.



T O

The Right Reverend Father in GOD,

**SAMUEL SQUIRE, D.D.**

LORD BISHOP of ST. DAVID'S,

The following WORK,

Published with a sincere Intention to do Good,

And therefore acceptable to his LORDSHIP,

Is most humbly Inscribed,

BY ONE,

Whose Heart, full of Gratitude

For many kind and unfollicited Favours,

Always feels the highest Satisfaction in every Opportunity

However trifling,

Of declaring HIMSELF,

With undissembled Reverence and Affection,

His LORDSHIP'S most dutiful,

And devoted Chaplain and Servant,

**William Dodd.**





---

## Advertisement.

“ ENQUIRIES after Happiness, and Rules for  
“ attaining it, are not so necessary and  
“ useful to Mankind (Mr. *Addison* remarks) as  
“ the Arts of Consolation, and supporting one’s  
“ self under Affliction.” Convinced of this, from  
Experience, and from the frequent Scenes of Dis-  
tress, to which his Office introduced him, the  
Writer of the following WORK imagined, that  
he could not engage in a more benevolent Attempt,  
than that of offering Comfort to his suffering and  
afflicted Fellow-creatures.

He therefore resolved upon preaching a Set of  
Discourses with this View: In which he had made  
great Progress; when, accidentally, the good Bi-  
shop *Hall*’s Treatise, called, *The Balm of Gilead*,  
fell into his Hand. As this coincided with his  
Plan, he freely used such Arguments of this amia-  
ble Writer, as approved themselves to his Judg-  
ment, altering the Style, and making other Im-  
provements as seemed necessary.

When he had finished the Discourses, it was de-  
termined to weave them into a Treatise, and lay  
them in a regular Form before the World, for the  
Benefit of such as might need, and would be glad  
of the Consolation afforded in them. Free Use  
hath been made of such Writers, as have united  
their kind Endeavours to assuage the Burthen of  
human Woe; amongst whom particular Respect  
should be paid to Dr. *Grosvenor*, to whose *Holy*  
*Mcurner* we are greatly indebted.

To the Treatise are added DEVOTIONS, some  
of which have been selected from the most emi-

ment Divines: And it is hoped that they will be found satisfactory to the Christian labouring under any Species of Affliction or Distress.

The Writer claims no Merit, and expects no Fame from this Work; which he publishes with a sincere and single Design to serve and to bless his Fellow-creatures: Nothing can or shall deprive him of the Reward of that good Intention; nor has he the least Doubt, that God will fail to make his humble Endeavour subservient to so happy an End.—And should that End be obtained, should one Tear be wiped from the Eye of Sorrow, one Groan suppressed at the Heart of Grief—should any learn from hence, to support with Patience the Weight of Calamity, and to look up, under it, with becoming Resignation to the Father of Comforts;—Every good Heart will allow, that an End so desirable, as this, will render alike insignificant, the Breath of Applause, or the Blast of Censure.—However, the Author is satisfied, there remains so much Candour and Humanity amongst us, that “the Design of the Work (to use Bishop *Patrick's* Words) is sufficient to give it “Protection, if it cannot gain it Approbation. “It hurts no Body, and therefore may pass, itself, with more Safety: And it offers its Service “to do every body Good; which, methinks, should “be taken kindly, even by those who stand in no “Need of it.”

*Wes-Ham,* }  
*March, 1764.* }

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# CONTENTS.

## CHAP. I.

### *Of Afflictions in general.*

	Page.
SECTION I. Introduction. The principal ends of afflictions in general, ——— ———	I
SECT. 2. Uses of affliction. General arguments of consolation, ——— ———	II
SECT. 3. Arguments of consolation, from the examples of holy men in all ages, the patriarchs, &c.	18
SECT. 4. Arguments of consolation, from the examples of holy men in all ages, the prophets, &c. General application, ——— ———	25
SECT. 5. General remark. Arguments of consolation, from the example of the apostles, &c.	34
SECT. 6. Arguments of consolation, from the examples of the martyrs, &c. Application of the whole, ——— ———	44
SECT. 7. The example of Job enforced, ———	55
SECT. 8. Reflections on the example of Job. His arguments of consolation recommended and enforced, ——— ——— ———	64
SECT. 9. Arguments of consolation, from the blessedness of a future state through Christ, Rev. vii. 13—17, explained, ——— ———	70

## CHAP. II.

### *Consolations for the Afflicted in Mind.*

SECT. 1. Consolations for the afflicted in mind,	84
SECT. 2. The same continued, ———	92
SECT. 3. The same continued, ———	99
SECT. 4. The same concluded; with a Letter,	109
SECT. 5. Consolations for persons under temptation: The right notion of temptation stated,	128
SECT. 6. The same continued; with proper methods of resisting temptation, ——— ———	138

## C H A P. III.

*Consolations for the Afflicted in Body.*

	Page.
SECT. 1. Consolations in sickness, ———	149
SECT. 2. Consolations on a sick bed, ———	159
SECT. 3. Consolations in sickness, ———	167
SECT. 4. Further consolations for the sick bed, ———	174

## C H A P. IV.

*Consolations for the Afflicted in Estate.*

SECT. 1. Consolations under the loss of friends, drawn from considerations respecting God, ———	183
SECT. 2. Consolations under the loss of friends, drawn from considerations respecting those friends themselves, ——— ——— ———	195
SECT. 3. Consolations under the loss of friends, drawn from considerations respecting ourselves, ———	201
SECT. 4. Consolations under the loss of friends, drawn from considerations respecting others, ———	206
SECT. 5. Sir Wm. Temple's letter of consolation to Lady Essex, on the loss of her only daughter, ———	210
SECT. 6. Conclusion of Consolations under the loss of friends ——— ———	223
*SECT. 6. Consolations under the loss of estate, or fortune, ——— ——— ———	228
SECT. 7. Consolations under the loss of estate. Exhortation to the poor, ———	237
SECT. 8. Consolations under the loss of reputation, ———	244
SECT. 9. Consolations under the loss of outward senses, sight, hearing, &c. ———	264
SECT. 10. Consolations under the want of children, ———	276
SECT. 11. Consolations under the inconveniences of old age, ——— ——— ———	283
SECT. 12. The good Christian comforted in death, ———	304
SECT. 13. Prayer, the grand source of comfort, recommended and enforced, ———	320

## APPENDIX.

	Page.
1. Serious advice to a person recovered from sickness,	339
2. On a mother's grief for the loss of her infant,	352
3. Archbishop Tillotson's Letter to a friend, who lay ill of a languishing disorder, — —	357

## DEVOTIONS.

## CHAP. I.

*For the Afflicted in general.*

For a person under the pressure of heavy affliction,	362
--	-----

## CHAP. II.

*For the Afflicted in Mind.*

A Prayer which a soul may use, that is full of doubts, and troubled in mind, ——— ———	365
Another for the same, or for one under deep melan- choly and dejection of spirit, ———	368
For one convinced of sin, ———	369
For the increase of faith in Christ, ———	371
For repentance, ——— ———	373
In time of temptation, ——— ———	376
For one under fears and doubts, as to the goodness of his spiritual condition: or under perplexing thoughts and scruples about his duty, ———	377
For one who is hurried with wicked and blasphemous thoughts, ——— ——— ———	379
For one who is afflicted with a profane mistrust of di- vine truth, and blasphemous thoughts, ———	381
For one under the dread of God's wrath, and ever- lasting damnation, ——— ———	382

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

*For the Afflicted in Body.*

	Page-
A Prayer to be said by the family or friends, when a sickness continues long, ——— ———	383
For a sick penitent, ——— ———	385
When a person is giving up the ghost ———	386
Thanksgiving after recovery from sickness,	387

## CHAP. IV.

*For the Afflicted in Estate.*

An act of resignation, when a friend is dead,	389
A Prayer for the use of a child that hath lost its parents, ——— ——— ———	391
A Prayer to be used by a widow, ———	392
A Prayer under losses and damages in our goods and estates, ——— ———	393
A Prayer to be said by such as are poor and low in the world, ——— ———	394
A Prayer under any injuries, abuses, or provocations,	396
A Prayer for the use of one that is aged, ———	397
A Prayer against the fear of death, ———	398
A Prayer for assistance at the hour of death,	399

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# C O M F O R T

F O R T H E

A F F L I C T E D, &c.

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C H A P. I.

*Of Afflictions in general.*

S E C T. I.

INTRODUCTION.—*The principal Ends of Afflictions in general.*

**S**T. Paul speaking of himself, and his fellow-sufferers, in the first and trying days of Christianity, observes, that *if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men most miserable\**. And of mankind in general we may say, that if in this life only we have hope, if this life only be the end of our existence, we are of all creatures, formed by the hand of God, the most miserable! The irrational part of the creation, strangers to the anxiety, and unacquaint-

\* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

## 2 I N T R O D U C T I O N.

ed with the cares and troubles which perplex mankind, freely enjoy what is set before them; and indulge without remorse or restraint the appetites implanted in them. Unconcerned for the future, and unconscious of events, they enjoy the present, and seem to have no farther hopes: and tho' doomed, full often, to suffer beneath the cruel hand of man, they indicate no sensations of foreboding pain; nor appear to double their misfortunes, by the melancholy anticipation of them.

But man, the great lord of the inferior world, finds care an inmate, which he cannot dislodge: and is so far from enjoying the present, without a view to the future! that all his life long, he seems living only for the future, and treasuring up the means of well-being hereafter. So far is he from finding satisfaction in the free and unrestrained gratification of his appetites; that his best reason continually disapproves such gratification: and wisdom perpetually inculcates, that his duty and his happiness consist in the restraint of those appetites. A slave to labour and anxiety, he frequently finds his labour fruitless, and his anxiety distressful: and at length every endeavour disappointed, he sinks down beneath the oppressive load of afflictions and troubles; and drops into the grave, soon to be wholly forgotten upon earth, worn out with sorrow, and wasted by sickness and woe.

Though



## I N T R O D U C T I O N. 3

Though from this view of human nature, the ancients rationally inferred the existence of a future state: yet from the light of the Gospel only can we satisfactorily resolve these riddles, and explain these otherwise inextricable difficulties. Look at man in himself, and without an eye to a future world, and he is a perfect mystery. Look at him, as a candidate for an eternal, an unchangeable inheritance; as a probationer in a world of trial, as a passing pilgrim thro' the desert of life to the mansions of uninterrupted repose;---and the mystery at once is cleared up. All is consistent, great and good. Trials and afflictions, seen in this view no longer amaze or perplex us: we see, in them, the hand of a wise conductor, and are able to discern, that they also work for the good of Man.

Now as such is the state of man here below; as trials and afflictions more or less, (whether brought upon us, thro' our own offences, or thro' the unavoidable necessity of things) are the inevitable portion of all the children of *Adam*: Much of our wisdom consists in the knowledge how to support and improve these trials;---how to receive them with propriety, and to render them productive of those good ends, which they are designed to attain.--- As some assistance in which necessary work, I propose to shew in general the principal ENDS, which God may be supposed to design by afflictions of whatever sort;

---which will naturally lead to the USES we ought to make of such afflictions ;--- some general arguments for CONSOLATION under them shall next be offered :--And this done, I will descend to particulars ; and endeavour to present the lenient balm of comfort, to sufferers of every sort ;---to those who are oppressed with troubles of MIND ; to those who are burdened with Sickness and pains of the BODY ; to those who are afflicted in ESTATE, with temporal losses ; loss of friends ;---loneliness, and desolation, hardships, and the frowns of the world.

And may that Prince of sufferers, who entered not into his glory, before he was crucified, succeed my endeavours, and bless them to the succour and support of those for whom they are designed ! That, thro' his grace, every child of affliction, who reads them, may be strengthened to endure with cheerfulness whatever God shall please to ordain ; and to bring forth the fruits of patience, and resignation : Graces, which will be crowned with glory in that state, where sorrow and sighing shall for ever be done away !

We are first then to speak of the principal ENDS ; which the goodness and wisdom of God may be supposed to intend, by afflicting his people.

Now we may say, with great truth, in the general, that in all the afflictions where-  
with

with he is pleased to try us, nothing is, nothing can be intended by the author of our being “but our good, and his glory.” *For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.---He doth not chastise for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be made partakers of his holiness;* that we may improve in virtue under his correcting hand, and become like our father, in disposition and in happiness.—But then, as different dispensations are necessary to produce that good, and to manifest that glory; so afflictions may be sent with a design---either to correct and amend what is evil or amiss in us; or to preserve us from evil for the future;—to wean our affections and draw off our hearts from this world, and to raise in them an earnest desire for the next:—they may be sent to exercise our graces and elevate our devotions; to try our patience, and so increase our glory, if we be found faithful.

It must be allowed, that as these are great and important ends; so afflictions are in their own nature, well fitted and calculated to produce them. For they are sent, by our heavenly Father, “to correct and amend what is evil and erroneous in our lives and practices, to punish us for the past, and preserve us from transgressions for the future?”—By stopping our career in wrong, and giving us as it were a pause:—they awaken the mind to reflection, and open upon our view, a scene, to which in a course of uninterrupted

## 6      ENDS OF AFFLICTION.

ted prosperity we perhaps should never have lifted our eyes. When the mind of man is engrossed by wrong desires and pursuits; his whole attention engaged, and his whole heart filled; to talk to him of the error of his ways, or to suggest to him the impropriety of his conduct, sounds light and absurd in his ears; and maketh no more impression, than the light dew-drop which falls on the marble.

But let those desires be thwarted, and those pursuits disappointed; let the good, which he so much doats on, be withdrawn; the evil, which he so much dislikes, be given him in its stead; and he will soon be in a disposition, proper for serious reflection; capable of receiving, and willing to improve wise counsel. Take away from the intemperate his health; from the vain his magnificence; from the wealthy his gold; from the ambitious his honours: take from the blind and over-weaning parent the child of his dotage; from the lover of this life, every means of enjoying it: The former will grow temperate; the vain will learn humility: each will feel; and then will know themselves: and be led by affliction into the path of right, and into an observance of the law of God.

*David declares, from his own experience, before I was afflicted, I went wrong; but now I have kept thy laws. It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn thy statutes.*

*tutes.* And his descendant *Manasseh* joins in the same confession; proud and wicked, till he was afflicted and in chains;—*but in his affliction, he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly!* \*

As afflictions are thus sent by God to correct our past and amend our future conduct, and are in themselves well calculated to produce that end; so are they no less conducive to another good purpose, which our father graciously designs, namely “the weaning our affections from this world, and raising them up to a better”--- *Ob Death*, says the wise man,---*how bitter is the remembrance of thee, unto a man who liveth at rest in his possessions; unto the man, who hath nothing to vex him; and who hath prosperity in all things:* † In such a situation, full of peace and full of plenteousness, the heart is riveted to this world: the enjoyment of things present dissipates the very thought of things to come.

But change the scene; and draw the dark and black veil of affliction over it; turn this bright day into night, this peace and pleasure into corrosive troubles:---and weary of the trial, the soul looks up and sighs for that eternal realm of repose, where pain and anxiety, shall torment us no more.

And thus the wise man paints the contrast. *Ob Death, acceptable is thy sentence unto the*

\* See Chron. xxxiii, 12.

† Eccles. xxxi. 1, &c.

## 8 ENDS OF AFFLICTION.

*needy; and unto him whose strength faileth, who is now in the last age, and is vexed with all things.* Indeed the more we see and feel of the emptiness, vanity, and afflictions of this world, the more of necessity we must be led to despise it;---the more must our affections be weaned from it;---and the more earnestly shall we long for that place of comfort, where our joys will be uninterrupted, unchangeable, and everlasting.

Nay, when God thinks fit to try us with afflictions here, when he is pleased, either by withdrawing our health---by removing from us our friends---by taking away our support---or by any other means incapacitating us for the enjoyments and endearments of this world;---what is there in it, which can at all engage our affections, or withhold our desires from that place of future recompence, where sickness never enters; whence our friends shall never be removed; where want shall never be known; and where we shall rest in peace with God, and the Lamb for ever and ever?

Another end which our heavenly Father designs, by afflicting his children is "the exercise of our graces, the trial of our patience, and in consequence, our greater glory." In this respect, afflictions are even necessary. Since without them, there are many christian graces, which could not even exist. Humility, resignation, patience and christian fortitude, without them, would not be known.

These

These are virtues, which, like the palm, prosper most, nay prosper only, under pressure: and which then appear in their most amiable and flourishing condition, when the cause, which calls them forth into action, is most difficult and afflictive. Now as these are graces of the first Name in the christian system; so we may be assured, that the most perfect exercise of them will, thro' Christ, obtain the fullest reward. We may be assured, that they who are most humble, most resigned, and most patient, under the correcting hand of Heaven, will receive from that hand, the fairest recompence; and the best increase of future glory.

We may also observe, that as afflictions are necessary for the exertion of these distinguished graces, so are they very conducive to the improvement of our devotion, and to the enkindling, with the most lively energy, the spirit of prayer in the heart. Cold and languid arise our prayers too often; when the world smiles around us, and our hearts are at ease: but let the storms and tempests of trouble arise, and tofs our vessels on the threatening surges of affliction, and distress;--we shall cry unto the Lord then, in our danger---we shall hasten to him importunately, with a *Lord save or we perish*. ---To this the experience of every man living bears testimony.--Now as earnest and sincere prayer, we are informed by our master, shall never be re-  
jected;

jected; we here again see the advantage of affliction, which arousing the dormant soul to zealous devotion, engages for it the defence and regard of Omnipotence.

I might urge further, to shew the natural tendency of afflictions to profit and amend the mind, (in agreement with those ends, which God all-gracious ever proposes in them,) ---I might urge the disposition of mind, which they induce; that tendernefs and softnefs of temper, which they generally occasion; which is so favourable to good impressions, which so readily admits the seeds of instruction and religion. High in prosperity, and unsubdued to knowledge, the mind hard, and callous, rejects with disdain every means, every offer, of improvement. But when sorrows wound and soften the soul, then is the season to cultivate, as it is the season when the cultivation will be admitted. And when wants are felt in the heart, then is the time, that the sufficiency of Christ's religion to satisfy every want, may be supposed most likely to be allowed.

SECT.



## S E C T. II.

*The Uses of Affliction. General Arguments of Consolation.*

**S**UCH then being the principal ENDS, which afflictions are meant to produce.—*Ends* which kindly centre in our advantage, and which propose nothing but our eternal felicity—we cannot be at a loss to know, what USES we are bound to make of them, whenever the wise providence of God finds them necessary and fitting for us. We are told, that *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Wherefore we have no reason to repine or be dissatisfied; to despair or be uneasy; though our trials be great, or long, or complicated, in the severest degree. They are marks of God's paternal love; and they will be a means of our everlasting good, if we are wise rightly to improve them.

Now in order to improve them, we should seriously consider, when they surround us, “for what cause and to what end they are sent?”

Are they sent to punish and correct our past faults, to amend our lives, and lead us into a better path for the future?—It is  
our

our duty to examine every former transaction of our lives: seriously to deplore those offences, which we have committed: and under the assistance of almighty grace to resolve, and to enter, upon a new and blameless course of life.

Are they sent to wean our hearts, from this world?—Again we must search, whether indeed we be not too strongly attached to temporary loves, and affections: whether sublunary things, do not hold our hearts too fast. And if we find this sad captivity; we must break the chain, and dedicate our soul to him, who alone can satisfy its desires.

Doth it please God to try us, for his glory, and our greater good hereafter, for the exercise of our patience and submission; and for the animating and enlivening our devotions?—Ours must be the business to work with him, for these gracious ends; cheerfully to receive all his good pleasure; to cleave to him the more closely, the more he thinks fit to afflict; and, like *Job*, to maintain our integrity, even tho' he should reduce us from the highest state, to that condition of naked want and misery, in which we entered and in which we must leave this world:—saying with an unfeigned submission, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!*

In short, to know the *end*, is to know the *use of afflictions*; and the man, who is satisfied,

fed, that the hand of God is in all; that he designs only the good of his creatures;—will never fail to receive with propriety, and to use with profit, whatever trials or troubles he may encounter: satisfied as he is, that all will work together for his good, though for the present it may seem hard and grievous to be borne; and though the intention and use of each particular dispensation may not be evidently manifest to him.

And this is the FIRST ground of CONSOLATION, under whatever befalls us below. “The knowledge that a wise and good God ordains, and directs the whole system of human affairs.”

The consolations, which the philosophy of the *Heathens* held forth to be afflicted, were too weak; were inefficacious to repress the sigh of woe; nay (as one of the *Roman* Emperors said, when those vain comforts were administered to him) they were so far from soothing, that they aggravated distress\*. For the best things they had to offer, were, that sufferings, sorrows, and death were unavoidable:—that tears and lamentations were fruitless:—that there could be no remedy, and therefore it was wrong and impious to grieve. While others absurdly advanced, that nothing was an evil to the wise man; and that

\* Hoc ipsum est, quod me male habet. It was said by *Augustus*. See *Abp. Tillotson's Sermons. Serm. 5.*

happy

#### 14 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION.

happy himself, he could never be touched by the hand of sorrow.

Far different is the consolation, which our divine religion presents to us; when it sets before our view—"a God creating, governing, and preserving the world. Nay, redeeming that world by sufferings; and holding forth to all those, who patiently endure, and willingly tread in the steps of their great Master, a kingdom of everlasting life!"

"The very first principle of religion, (as one has said †) is wonderfully conducive to bear us up, under all the changes and chances to which our life is subject; namely, that there is a God, a powerful, a wise, a good Being; who first made the world, and continues to govern it; by whose goodness all things are designed; and by whose providence all things are conducted to bring about the greatest and best ends. The sorrowful and pensive wretch, who was giving way to his misfortunes, and mournfully sinking under them, the moment this doctrine comes in to his aid, hushes all his complaints; and thus speaks comfort to his soul: It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good; without his direction I am assured that no evil can befall me; without his permission, that no power can hurt me; it is impossible a Being so wise should mistake my happiness;—or that a Being so good should contradict it. If

† See *Sternes's Sermons*, Vol. 2.

he hath denied me richer, or other advantages, perhaps he foresees the gratifying my wishes would undo me, and by my own abuse of them, be perverted to my ruin.—If he hath denied me the request of children.—or in his providence has thought fit to take them from me—how can I say, whether he has not dealt kindly with me, and only taken that away, which he foresaw, would embitter and shorten my days—It does so to thousands, where the disobedience of a thankless child, has brought down the parents grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.—Has he visited me with sickness, with poverty, or other disappointments? Can I say, but these are blessings in disguise? So many different expressions of his care and concern, to disentangle my thoughts from the world, and fix them upon another—another, a better world beyond this!”—This thought opens a new scene of hope and consolation to the unfortunate, and as the persuasion of a providence, reconciles him to the evils he has suffered:—this prospect of a future life, gives him strength to despise them, and to esteem the light afflictions of this life as they are; not worthy to be compared with what is reserved for him hereafter.”

But I urge not this motive at present, as I propose to consider it at large in a distinct section: and to set before you the exceeding happiness awaiting those, who coming out of *great tribulation*

## 16 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION.

*bulation have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb\*.*

'Tis from thence that the Christian draws his peculiar comfort; from the view of that BLEEDING LAMB, of that divine and gracious Master, who was made perfect by sufferings: who has left the cross, as a precious burden to be borne by all his followers; but as a burden which his love and example shall make light and easy; which that spirit, whose name is the Comforter, shall at length totally remove; and give in its place, the crown of glory which fadeth not away.

Tho' therefore in every trial, and in every affliction we may derive strong consolation from the remembrance, that God in every trial intends his servants good; that he doth not willingly afflict, for his own pleasure, but for our profit;—correcting in love, that his children may be zealous and repent:—tho' we may derive strong comfort from the happy knowledge, that we are in the hands, and under the providential care of the God, who created and preserves the whole universe of his rational creatures; of the God, who is all-wise to provide, all-powerful to protect; all-good to relieve, assist and bless us!—Of the God, who is our father, and who regardeth us with the most tender paternal care; who hath given us not only our existence, but all things which we enjoy; and who alone can give us all things which we

\* *Rev. vii. 14.*

expect hereafter;—though an eternity of bliss, we are assured, awaits our faithful and patient enduring: though, from each of these arguments, we may derive the sweetest satisfaction, and the fullest hope to our souls;—yet superior to them all will be the steady looking unto JESUS, *the author and finisher of our salvation; who, for the joy which was placed before him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and is set down for ever at the right hand of God!*

When we consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, we shall not be wearied, nor faint in our minds; but shall rejoice, inasmuch as we are found worthy to suffer with him, that we may fill up the measure of his afflictions in this world, and enter triumphant into that realm, where the palm of victory and the crown of glory shall adorn each hand and head, which have been faithful unto death; and have received, with the true spirit of resignation, evil as well as good from the hand of their Lord.

Designing to offer, in our next section, the example of the suffering Saints and Servants of God who have gone before us, as another Argument of Consolation,—We will conclude the present with the words of our Church—

“There should be no greater comfort to christian persons, than to be made like unto Christ, by suffering patiently adversities, troubles

bles, and sickness. For he himself went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain; he entered not into his glory, before he was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy, is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life, is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with him in everlasting life.”

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## S E C T. III.

*Arguments of Consolation—from the Examples of holy Men in all Ages—The Patriarchs, &c.*

**W**E come now to lay before you another argument of general consolation, derived from the example of the Saints and Servants of God in all ages. An argument, which St. James urges in the following words: *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. Behold, we count them happy who are patient. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end [and purpose] of the Lord, in so trying him: and learn from thence] that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.\**

St. James here proposeth to the afflicted Christians, as an argument of great conso-

\* James v. 10, 11.

lation,



lation, the example of those who were most favoured by God, so much favoured as to deliver his particular messages to the people,—and yet were not exempt from suffering and affliction, from *evil treatment*, (*κακοπαθειας*) persecution and distress; which, nevertheless, they bore with all possible patience, and long-suffering.—He then remarks, that this was no proof of their *misery* and *disesteem*, either in the sight of God or good men. For *behold*, saith he, *we count them happy*\* *who are patient*—we, not I myself, but all of us—; all Christians are agreed in this judgment, that they are truly blessed people, who endure with patience and resignation the *trials* wherewith God may please to exercise them. And he continues to observe, that they had a lively proof of this felicity, and of God's tender mercy, in that affliction which *Job* endured so patiently, and which redounded so much to his own happiness, and to the glory of God, who tried him only to reward him, and who afflicted him only to recompence him in the end, with peculiar favour.

This argument cannot fail of its effect, whenever the soul, melancholy, desponding, and uneasily distressed with fear of the Divine displeasure—looks up to that multitude of suffering Saints, and Servants, who received the highest marks of God's choice

\* Μακαριζομεν, We congratulate them, as happy people.

## 20 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

and love here below, and yet were not exempt from the severest of sufferings.—To improve it, let us take a view of those *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, those *Apostles* and *Martyrs*, those excellent and approved Children of our heavenly Father, who have trod the suffering path to glory, who now wear the robe of white, and hold the palm of victory, in that realm, where the Lamb who was slain, admits them to the participation of his triumph.

The first righteous man, to whom God gave testimony, fell a sacrifice to the envy and malice of his brother; and his blood so cruelly shed still speaking to us, declares, that tribulation is no proof of the Divine displeasure; and that the highest and most exemplary virtue, procures no exemption from it.

*Noah*—distinguished so much for his righteousness in a totally corrupted world, that God made choice of him to preserve the human race, and re-people the deluged earth,—was a man of sufferings and sorrow, as we may reasonably conclude, from the state of things before him. For as a good man, how could he behold his fellow-creatures so wretchedly depraved, without the tenderest concern; how could he behold his fellow-creatures, so terribly destroyed, without the most feeling sorrow of heart! nor can we apprehend a more afflictive source of uneasiness, than the profane disobedience of one of those children, who had been so miraculously preserved—and  
from

from whose disobedience, he saw, by the spirit of prophecy, a long chain of evils and troubles extending itself through one stem of his devoted race!

*Abraham*, second to none in the Divine regard, peculiarly chosen, favoured, visited,—was by no means unacquainted with the difficulties of trial, and the burden of affliction. Long he travelled a pilgrim and a sojourner in a strange country, without any certain possessions, moving his tent, as God ordained—at whose call he had left his father's house and his own inheritance, which are always most dear to every man. Though the heir of the world by promise, God did not please for a long time to give him children—his beloved wife was barren. A stranger, he thought was likely to be the heir of his house. At length, after hope had become hopeless, the promised son was given. Then how severe a trial was it to dismiss the bond-woman and her son, in such sad circumstances?—But how much more severe—to stretch upon the altar his son, his only, his beloved son, *Isaac*, to hold the fatal knife to his dear throat! Heroic instance of faith and resignation! this was a trial indeed: from thence the children of affliction may derive strong consolation, under every oppressive circumstance.

*Isaac* had a bitter ingredient in his cup; one of the most bitter perhaps, which parents can taste—the unnatural division between his

## 22 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

sons *Eſau* and *Jacob*, and the ſad probability, that, like the firſt father, he might (through the malice of the elder) be deprived of them both in one day.

*Jacob's* was a life of ſuffering: *Few and evil*, ſaid he to *Pharoah*, *have the days of the years of my life been,*—and indeed, upon a review of it, one cannot well conceive any ſcene more afflictive and uneaſy. Banished as it were, through his brother's hatred, from home, and wandering a lone ſtranger through a diſtant land, he lived long in a ſtate of ſervitude, under a moroſe and peeviſh maſter, whoſe alliance to him ought to have ſoftened his difficulties. “*Thus I was*, ſays he expoſtulating with *Laban*, *in the day the drought conſumed me, and the froſt by night; and my ſleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy houſe: I ſerved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and ſix years for thy cattle, and thou haſt changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my Father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Iſaac, had been with me, ſurely thou haſt ſent me away now empty. God hath ſeen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and hath rebuked thee.*” And as the beginning, ſo the cloſe of his life was made up of afflictions: greater than which we cannot well conceive: when his beloved ſon *Joſeph* was ſo cruelly taken from him—when famine oppreſt his family—; and the only way to eſcape death, was even worſe

worse than death,—the parting with his beloved *Benjamin*—*My son*, said he, *shall not go down with you:—me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me. He shall not go with you—for his brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him in the way by which ye go, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.*

Nor was *Joseph*, the favourite son of this afflicted parent, a stranger to the school of trial, in which his father was so severely exercised. *Joseph* stands forth, a distinguished character in the sacred history; and the particular hand of a protecting providence, so discernable in all the events of his interesting life, assures us, that God, in the management of his wise purposes, can render evils and afflictions productive of the best and greatest ends: while they, whom, from external appearances, we should judge, least regarded by him, are chief in his favour, and first in his attention. *Joseph* in the pit, and with the *Ismaelites*, in the house of *Potiphar*, and in confinement; *Joseph* the slave, and the prisoner, was yet the chosen servant of God; was in his hand the salvation of the whole vast empire of *Egypt*, as well as of his own family; and the instrument, by which a most awful dispensation of providence was conducted.

Enslaved and afflicted in *Egypt*, and obliged to serve with rigour, the whole nation of the *Israelites*, considered as the peculiar people of God, may, with propriety, be said to set us an example of suffering affliction. Selected from all the families of the earth, and taken into the immediate protection of the most high, they were not protected by him from the stroke of affliction; but were proved, and tried, as gold is tried in the furnace.

*Moses*, their great law-giver, like whom no mere man was ever admitted to so near an intercourse with the Deity, sent upon so high a commission, and employed in so important an office, as that of *mediator*, between *Jehovah* and the people—even this *Moses*, meek man of God, was all his life long familiar with afflictions and troubles;—wearied out with the weight of care; and even in the end deprived of that temporal blessing, which he expected---an happy admission into the promised land. And we are informed to our comfort, that so far was *Moses* from judging afflictions to be evils in themselves, that he agreed with *St. James*, and with all Christians, in counting *them* happy who patiently endure---for we read, that he *refused*, when he was come to years of discernment, to be called the son of *Pharaoh's* daughter---choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming

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FROM EXAMPLES OF PATRIARCHS, &c. 25  
*ing the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward—that recompence, a respect to which renders all afflictions light and easy to be borne.*

Nor was *Aaron* his brother, though so eminently preferred to the first place in God's service, and the nearest access to the Divinity—exempt from the common lot of mortals. Out of four sons, he had the affliction to behold two devoured by fire sent from God to punish their irreligion; and on account of his own and his sister's mourning, had the misfortune to see her covered with leprosy, while himself was obliged earnestly to deprecate the Divine displeasure.

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#### S E C T. IV.

*Arguments of Consolation—from the Examples of holy Men in all ages.—The Prophets, &c.—General application.*

**T**HE time would fail me to speak of all those recorded in the Word of God, who have been made perfect through suffering: of *Job* in particular, it is not possible to speak in a short compass; his example deserves and shall have a separate and full consideration hereafter.\* I pass on therefore to him, of whom a character is given expressive of the highest divine complacence—"the man after

\* See Sect. vii.

*God's own heart.*"\* Yet before he came to the throne, what a life of uneasiness, perfecution, trial, and trouble was *David's*, hunted as he was by *Saul*, like a partridge on the mountains,† according to his own expression! And after he came to the throne, after his fall especially, what a scene of sorrow, distressful beyond imagination, was before him! Filial ingratitude, rebellion, incest, murder: the sword never departed from his house; and sorrow, we may be assured, never departed from his heart.—These afflictions, it may be said, were drawn upon him, by his own impiety: and alas, what but our own impieties and transgressions, for the most part, draw down the chastisements of heaven upon us? But was it not a gracious mark of God's tender care for *David*, that he suffered him not to enjoy undisturbed his criminal indulgence? but by fatherly corrections awakened him to repentance, and by severe chastisements upon earth purified his soul for heaven? *David*, in his afflictions, powerfully declar-eth the desire and fearful effects of presumptuous transgressions; and if any man thinks himself encouraged, by his example, to sin—let him look at his punishment, and tremble for the mistake. While, in his afflictions, *David* addresseth the sweetest consolation to

\* 1 Sam. xxvi. 20.

† See Dr. *Candler's* Vindication of *David*, &c.—See also *Christian's Magazine*, vol. iii. 300, &c.



all those who, burdened with the guilt, are kindly corrected here, with the punishment of sin. Happy will it be, if the evils, which our offences have so justly merited and drawn down, have the same effect upon ours, which they had upon the heart of the King of *Israel*: happy they, who have deserved justly the Divine displeasure, experience, on the contrary, with *David*, the Divine loving kindness in fatherly corrections; and, with *David*, sincerely repent.

From *David*, the King and the Prophet, look we to *Isaiab*, a Prophet of the first name, and also of royal blood. None of the Prophets were enlightened by the heavenly wisdom to deliver more excellent and elevated prophecies, concerning the Messiah and his kingdom. And no man's life was more holy: yet no man's death was more afflictive. For it is the constant tradition, both of *Jews* and *Christians*, that he was put to death by being sawn asunder, in the reign and by the command of *Manasseb*—The lives of *Elijab* and *Elisba* were an uninterrupted scene of distress and trouble: as the commissions which they had to deliver were so harsh and severe, that they were compelled often to secrete themselves, and to live in loneliness and exile; in weariness and anxiety.

*Jeremiab*, as we learn from his own account, was continually persecuted by the priests and false prophets of his day: *Zede-*  
*kiah*

*kiab* at length shut him up in prison; and escaping from hence, he was cast into a dungeon, where he sunk in the mire, and lay almost suffocated in it. He saw the destruction of his country, and was himself carried a captive into *Egypt*; where, according to general tradition, he was put to death; some say, stoned by the *Jews*, who could not bear his rebukes and prophecies. His book of *Lamentations* abundantly proves, that he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

*Ezekiel* was a sufferer in the common calamity of his country, and lived a wretched captive in *Chaldea*. God was there pleased to try him with private afflictions. The desire of his eyes was taken away with a stroke.— And at length he was killed by the General of his own nation, who was enraged at the Prophet for censuring his conduct.

The sufferings of *Daniel* are well known, his many trials, and God's wonderful deliverance of him from them: as well as theirs, who boldly confessed their God amidst idolaters, and were preserved from the power of the fire, by the mighty hand of him who careth for his servants, and who is Almighty to save.

The rest of the Prophets trod in the same path; and we shall find, that the followers of Christ (who himself triumphant over sufferings, leads the way) have walked with cheerfulness and  
 patience

patience after their divine Master—whom the *Apostles* and *Evangelists*, the *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, and all the chosen Saints in every age, and place, and time, have joyfully accompanied, through tribulations and afflictions to glory.—But the review of these shall engage the following section: while we close the prospect we have taken of the servants of God before Christ, with the account of that heroic sufferer, in the time of the *Maccabees*, who herself and her seven sons gladly embraced death in all its terrors, that they might approve their fidelity to that God, whose loving-kindness and mercy they joyfully confessed in the midst of tortures.

Indeed the whole family of the *Maccabees*, than whom it is not easy to find a race of men, more pious or more valiant, stand forth illustrious examples of suffering patience.—It was in their days, under the tyrant *Antiochus Epiphanes*, who was one of the greatest persecutors of the *Jewish* Church, that seven brethren, with their mother, were taken, and by the King commanded to renounce their religion, and to taste swine's flesh contrary to their law; and, upon their refusal, to oblige them to it, they were tormented with whips and scourges, when one of them, who spoke first, said thus: "What wouldest thou ask or learn of us? we are ready to die, rather than to transgress the laws of our fathers." Upon which the  
King

### 30 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

King being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot; which forthwith being heated, he commanded the tongue of him to be cut out that spake first, and to cut off the utmost parts of his body; the rest of his brethren, and his mother, looking on. When he was thus maimed and wounded, *Antiochus* commanded him, being yet alive, to be brought to the fire, and to be fried in the pan; and as the vapour of the pan was for a good space dispersed, the rest exhorted one another, with the mother, to die manfully. Six of the brethren were put to death in this manner, amidst the most excruciating torment.—But the mother, says my historian, was marvellous above all, and worthy of honourable memory; for when she saw her sons thus slain before her eyes, she bore it with a good courage, because of the hope she had in the Lord. And in a pathetic speech she exhorted and encouraged her sons.—*Antiochus*, after the six elder brethren were put to death, whilst the youngest was yet alive, did not only exhort him by words, but assure him by oaths, that he would make him both a rich and a happy man, if he would turn from the law of his fathers; and that also he would take him for his friend, and trust him greatly in his affairs. But when the young man would in no case hearken unto him, the King called his mother, and exhorted her, that she would counsel the young man to save his life.

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—She promised him, that she would counsel her son; and accordingly she said to him, “O my son, have pity upon thy mother, who bare thee and suckled thee, who nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age, and endured all the troubles of thy education. I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein; and consider, that God made them of things, which were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormentor, but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again with thy brethren.” While she was yet speaking, the young man said, “Whom wait ye for? I will not obey the King’s commandment, but I will obey the commandment of the law, which was given by *Moses*. And thou who hast been the author of all the mischief against the *Hebrews*, shalt not escape the hands of God,—*for we suffer because of our sins. And though the living Lord be angry with us a little while, for our chastizing and correction, yet shall he be at one again with his servants.* But thou, godless man, shalt not escape the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things.”—Then the King being in a rage, handled him worse than the rest. So the man died undefiled, and put his whole trust in the Lord. Last of all, after her sons, died the mother, cruelly tormented, but rejoicing, inasmuch as she was found worthy

to suffer for God, and to be united again in the kingdom of heaven to her happy and triumphant sons.\*

From these examples we see, how much it hath pleased God to try his best and most chosen servants with afflictions—*those servants, some of whom, as St. Paul expresses it, had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment: others were tortured, not accepting a deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*

When oppressed with the burden of affliction, the soul contemplates this company of *Patriarchs* and *Prophets*, and all these chosen servants of God, who in this world had great conflicts, but now rejoice, now are comforted, now are secure in the everlasting kingdom---the view cannot fail to dispel every desponding thought, to inspire the best hopes, and firmest resolutions. While the soul must derive the strongest consolations from it, and thus speak peace to his troubled thoughts: "If any thing had been better, and more conducive for the salvation of man than suffering; surely God would have shewn it, and lead his choicest servants by that way to glory! But his choicest servants have been

\* See 2 *Maccab.* c. vii.

made perfect---and happy are they, who with them are made perfect, through suffering: willingly and thankfully therefore do I embrace, oh! heavenly Father, these corrections, wherewith thou art pleased to try me—I accept them as tokens of thy love, and look with pleasure to my fellow-sufferers, who have passed through the trial, and are now for ever at rest! While I behold their great examples, let me rejoice to suffer with; let me learn to be patient and resigned, like them! The bitter cup which thou givest me to drink, is no mark of thy wrath;—thy Saints in all ages have drank of it; I receive it therefore gladly from thy fatherly, thy loving hand. Even thy only begotten Son drank of that cup of trembling! Happy soul, who art so regarded by thy God, that he will not leave thee to the dangerous delusion of a smiling world, and of uninterrupted ease; he hath better things in store for thee! Hold up;—support thy heart—; the kingdom is prepared for thee—Thou shalt be united to the goodly fellowship of the Prophets—: thy *light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which thou shalt shortly receive.*”

## S E C T. V.

*General remark—Arguments of Consolation,  
from the Example of the Apostles, &c.*

**A**MONGST the various arguments which are urged in proof of the Christian Religion, that perhaps is not the least conclusive, which is drawn from the doctrine of Suffering and Trial, so constantly inculcated throughout the New-Testament. For that religion can be no other than Divine, which proposing no earthly motives or emoluments; which supported by no temporal power, and recommended by no external earthly accommodations—; but which, on the contrary, setting before mankind tribulation and distress, persecution and contempt, — notwithstanding prevails over the earth, gains Confessors to avow it in the midst of peril, gains Martyrs to attest it in the midst of tortures.

And such is the Religion of Christ; the Divine Author of it came meek and lowly himself, a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief; and sought not to allure followers by specious proposals, and high offers of advantage. So far from it, that, he plainly declared, whosoever would be his Disciple, must take up the cross, deny himself, and follow a suffering Master in the suffering way. He declared, that whosoever embraced his faith, must encounter the hatred  
and



FROM EXAMPLES OF THE APOSTLES, &c. 35  
and opposition of the world; that much tribulation would infallibly be their portion; that their rewards were future, but their trial present. Averse to sufferings as human nature universally is; universally as human nature longeth after ease and happiness, and wisheth to enjoy the favourable esteem of fellow-creatures; one would imagine, that such a Religion would have found few followers: for, alas! who is so much in love with tribulation, as voluntarily to embrace a profession, which is inseparably connected with it; nay, which proposeth it as necessary and unavoidable?—and yet this religion--which made such proposals; nay, whose blessed Propounder verified his doctrine, by his own afflictive life and death,—prevailed in the hands of a few mean men; and in a short time filled the world; in a short time found thousands and ten thousands, ready to die in support of it;—nay *dying*—dying amidst the severest tortures, in support of it.—This Religion triumphed over all the powers of opposition, united with the utmost firmness to stem its progress; triumphed over the strongest and most uniform principle of human nature; over the almost invincible prejudices of custom and education; over the wisdom of self-sufficient philosophy; over the craft and secular interests of the established superstitions; over the authority of Magistrates, and the power of Kings:—nay, triumphed even over human nature!—

and thus abundantly demonstrated its Divine original. For upon an impartial survey, let a man point out, if he can, any rational solution of so extraordinary a *fact*; and shew to us, how such an effect should follow, except from that cause which we assign, the immediate and miraculous interposition of God. To this all things are easy; and when the Omnipotent lays to his hand, we cannot marvel, that a Religion shall prevail which opposes every earthly maxim, offereth only sufferings and trials at present, its rewards being at a distance, after death, and in a future world.

As from this argument we may certainly derive a strong confirmation of our faith; so may we add strength to the argument itself, as well as much consolation to our souls in every trial, from a review of those Saints and Servants of this suffering Master, who, in proof of the truth of this doctrine, that “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven”—have, through much tribulation, run their course, and borne their cross after their crucified Lord.

From a review, in the last section, of the Patriarchs and Prophets, and most chosen Servants of God, before the coming of Christ—we have seen, that this is no peculiarity in the Christian dispensation. The suffering way hath, from all time, been the way to glory: and we found, that the most approved Servants of the  
Father

Father of heaven, have passed along this path to their Father's house. But when the everlasting Son of God himself vouchsafed to dignify this way; from that time it became the way of peculiar blessedness, as through the precious blood he hath shed upon it, its roughness is in a great measure removed, and it is found far more delightful to tread: for Christ not only drew out the sting from death, when he died, but drank all its bitterness from the cup of sorrow, when it was held forth to him in the garden of agony!

In prosecution of our design, let us now take a view of those blessed Saints, the Apostles and Evangelists, the Martyrs and Confessors, who have followed his steps, and been perfected through sufferings.

Amidst the innumerable multitude, who are clothed in robes, washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb;—behold the Proto-martyr *St. Stephen!* He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost; the wisdom, with which he spake, was not to be resisted; the splendor of his countenance, bright as an angel's declared the angelic purity of his mind! Yet, behold, he is not exempt from suffering—: the hardy persecutors stop their ears against him; he is stoned; while the triumphant sufferer, kneels,—prays, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit—Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”—and thus saying, falls asleep!

*Peter*, first in zeal, and first in honour amidst that glorious company of Apostles, who were all made perfect by sufferings, early after his Master's death began to taste the cup: he, with others of the sacred College, when unjustly scourged by the *Jewish* Rulers, departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for their divine and beloved Master's name. And after a life of labour, fatigue, and distress, he was at length put to death, by the command of the savage *Nero*, who ordered him to be crucified; when the Apostle, affirming, that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture, wherein his Lord had suffered before him, was affixed to the torturing machine with his head downward.

St. *James* indeed was the first apostle who laid down his life for his Master. His life was the most exemplary, and his character in *Jerusalem* the most elevated. *Herod*, the governor of *Jerusalem*, in order to gratify some of the people, ordered the good man to be beheaded. And it is remarkable, that as he was going to the place of martyrdom, his accuser, being enlightened by the courage and constancy which St. *James* had shewn at his trial, repented of what he had done, and falling at the Apostle's feet, humbly begged his forgiveness for what he had witnessed against him. After a little surprize, St. *James* raised him up, and embraced him, saying, *Peace be*  
to

FROM EXAMPLES OF THE APOSTLES, &c. 39  
to thee. Whereupon he publickly professed  
himself a Christian, and was beheaded at the  
same time with the Apostle.

St. *John*, his divine brother, the peculiar  
friend and favourite of his Lord, though in-  
deed he was the only one of the Apostles who  
died not a violent death; yet for many years  
endured all the hardships of persecution, and  
all the difficulties of the apostolic function.  
It is well known, that a most painful death  
was designed for him, though the power of  
his God prevented the boiling oil from  
harming him. It is well known, that he was  
sent a banished slave to work in the mines at  
*Patmos*, and such slaves always were forcibly  
deprived of one of their eyes, and endured  
other great extremities. He remained sever-  
al years in this desolate place, and suffered  
all the severities of the worst and most painful  
exile.

Which of the Apostles stands not forth an  
example of patient endurance?—St. *Andrew*,  
after having traversed the inhospitable wilds  
of *Scythia*, to plant there the Christian faith,  
was at length seized by an idolatrous *Pro-*  
*consul*, commanded to be scourged, and then  
to be crucified; and that his death might be  
as lingering and painful as possible, he was  
fastened to the cross, not with nails, but with  
cords! How strong an instance of patience  
and triumph was he, when coming within  
sight of the cross, perfectly chearful and com-

posed, he spake thus, "Long, very long, have I expected and desired this happy hour! The cross hath been consecrated by bearing the body of Christ; joyful and triumphant therefore do I come to it, that it may receive me as a Disciple and follower of him, who once hung upon it; and be the means to carry me safe unto my blessed Master, as it was the instrument upon which he redeemed me." Having prayed and exhorted the people to constancy and perseverance in their religion, he was fastened to the cross, whereon he hung three days, teaching and instructing the people all the time; and when great importunities were used with the Proconsul to spare his life, he earnestly begged of our Lord, that he might depart at this time, and seal the truth of his Religion with his blood: which happened accordingly.

St. *Philip*, after a severe and terrible scourging at *Hierapolis*, was hanged up by the neck against a pillar. St. *James the Less*, revered for his extraordinary virtues no less by *Jews* than Christians, was, by the envious Scribes and Pharisees, thrown from a rock; and being very much bruised, though not killed with the fall, he recovered so much as to get upon his knees, and pray for them who thus cruelly used him; and while he was thus praying for them, they loaded him with a shower of stones, till one with a fuller's club beat out his brains. It is remarkable, that *Josephus*  
men-

mentions the death of this just man, as that which more immediately alarmed the Divine vengeance, and hastened the universal ruin and destruction of the *Jewish* nation.

The zealous servant of Christ, *St. Bartholomew*, who, unwearied in duty, pierced even into *India* to spread the glad tidings of redemption, was first slay'd alive, and afterwards crucified with his head downwards. He bore with unshaken patience and cheerfulness the horrid usage, and continued to comfort and confirm his Christian converts to the last moment of his life.

*St. Thomas*, who travelled through the most distant regions, and encountered the greatest difficulties, was at length murdered by the *Bramins*. For having converted many to the faith in *India*, and amongst the rest the Prince of the country, the *Bramins* perceiving that their craft was thus in danger, resolved to put a stop to his successful progress, and conspired his death. And one day, when our Apostle was retired without the city of *Malopur* for his private devotions, they assaulted him, with several armed men, loaded him with darts and stones, and then one run him through with a lance.

*St. Matthew*, whose principal province of instruction was *Ethiopia*, there suffered martyrdom, though the manner of his death is not certainly known. *St. Simon* and *St. Jude* both fell by the hands of persecution; the one  
was

was crucified, the other put to a cruel and tormenting death by the *Magi*. *St. Matthias* was first stoned, and afterwards beheaded. *St. Mark* suffered martyrdom in *Egypt*. The people enraged against him, for discrediting their vile idol *Serapis*, broke in upon him when he was performing Divine service, and binding his feet with cords, dragged him into the streets, and thrust him into prison, where he lay all night. Next day the enraged people renewed the tragedy, and used him in the same manner, till his flesh being raked off, and his blood run out, his spirits failed, and he expired: some add, that they burnt his body.

*St. Barnabas*, the companion of *St. Paul* for a long time, was seized by the *Jews* when preaching in one of their synagogues; in a corner of which they shut him up till night, when they brought him forth, and after infinite tortures, stoned him to death.

And to fill up the account, how many, how great, how long were the trials and afflictions of *St. Paul* himself, that chosen vessel, peculiarly separated and set apart to the Gospel of Christ? They are enumerated by himself, and the hearing of them cannot fail to teach us patience and submission: "Are they ministers of Christ? saith he, I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the *Jews* five times received I forty stripes save



save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.”— And in the Acts of the Apostles we have the history of this great champion’s sufferings continued, which at length terminated in a violent death: for he was martyr’d at *Rome*, by the command of *Nero*, who was the first of the *Roman* Emperors that dyed his hands in the blood of the Christians; and who caused those two chief pillars of the faith, *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, the one to be crucified, the other to be beheaded.

If now we stand still a while, and contemplate this glorious company of the Apostles and Evangelists, who were chosen peculiarly, and peculiarly favoured by their divine Master; who were employed in the highest and most honourable office, and endowed with the most singular and estimable gifts—and yet entered into the celestial kingdom through much tribulation; we shall be satisfied, that  
the

#### 44 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

the faith must needs be Divine, which could support men, amidst the wreck of every worldly good, and cheer them amidst the endurance of every worldly evil; we shall be satisfied, that afflictions are blessings; and so learn to bear them not only with patience, but with joyfulness; as thereby we are conformed to those shining patterns, who are seated around the Lamb that was slain, upon twelve thrones, in the fulness of honour and bliss.

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#### S E C T. VI.

*Arguments of Consolation—*from the Examples of holy Men in all ages.—*The Martyrs, &c. Application of the whole.*

**F**ROM the Apostles and Evangelists let us extend our view still farther, and we shall find yet greater cause of chearful submission under the correcting hand of our Father: for not the *Apostles* and *Evangelists* only, but the noble army of Martyrs praise him, and with songs of triumph attest the glorious truth which we would enforce, that “thro’ much tribulation we must pass to the kingdom of heaven”—and that “our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

The

The history of the church for the three first centuries, is little more than a history of persecution and martyrdom: the numbers who gave up their lives under the several *Roman* persecutions are almost incredible. They are called in the Revelation—*a multitude which no man could number*. The sufferings they endured are shocking to relate, and such as one would have imagined, brutality itself could never have inflicted upon human nature. The cheerfulness wherewith the Martyrs and Confessors—young and old, women and children, went to the torture—the patience wherewith they endured—nay, the earnestness they expressed to endure, and to give up their lives for their beloved Master,—are wonderful proofs of the power of Divine grace; and such as cannot fail to produce very happy fruits in your hearts and lives, if you carefully peruse the histories; than which nothing perhaps may be more useful or more instructive, may tend more to confirm your faith and establish your hope.

I will only just produce two or three passages, respecting the persecutions in general at *Rome*, and in *Africa*, from an historian of good credit and authority:\* and which will serve to fill your souls with praise, as well on

\* The history made use of, is that of the Abbé *Fleury*, which indeed is not to be recommended without great reserve. It is to be lamented, that we have not a rational and satisfactory Church history to refer to in our language: though, it is hoped, that this deficiency will ere long be supplied.

behalf of those, who endured so triumphantly ; as on behalf of yourselves, whom the goodness of God doth not call forth to such severe trials ! Oh ! how grateful should we be for his exceeding loving-kindness : and—alas ! for our luke-warmness—how diligent to express our sense of his particular favour, by the particular zeal and devotion of our lives !

“ *Nero*, the Emperor of *Rome*, had himself set that great city on fire, and in order to avert the public odium, as well as to satisfy his cruel revenge on the Christians, he laid the blame upon them, and accordingly commenced a persecution against them. Many of them were taken up and put to death, as being convicted of the greatest crimes, without any enquiry into the truth. Their torments were attended with cruel mockings ; some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and given to dogs to be torn to pieces ; some were crucified, and others run through with stakes. Some they dressed in a kind of garment, dipt in pitch and other combustible matter, which they afterwards set on fire : so that these sufferers served instead of torches to give light in the night time. *Nero* made an entertainment of this kind in his gardens, where he himself drove his chariot by the light of these horrible illuminations.—This was the first persecution of the Emperors against the Christians, and they gloried in being condemned by *Nero*, who was a disgrace  
to

FROM EXAMPLES OF THE MARTYRS, &c. 47  
to human nature, and an enemy to goodness  
itself."

In another place says the historian, "*Decius* coming to *Rome* in the beginning of his reign, published a cruel edict against the Christians, and sent it to all the Governors of the provinces. The persecution began in a very terrible manner, and the whole employment of the magistrates was to find out the Christians and punish them. To threatening they added a dreadful preparation of all sorts of instruments of torture, as swords, fires, wild beasts, pits, red-hot chains, wheels to extend their bodies upon, in order to tear them with talons of iron. Every one studied to find out some new inventions. Some made it their business to accuse, some to seek out those who lay concealed, others to pursue those who fled, and to seize upon their estates. Their punishment lasted a long time, in order to deprive them of the hopes of dying, and to torment them without ceasing till their constancy failed them."

Again—"finding that torments were ineffectual, through the power of Jesus Christ, and the patience of the Martyrs, they shut them up in dark and loathsome prisons; they put their feet in wooden stocks, extended them even to the extremest hole, and used them in so barbarous a manner, that the greatest part of them were stifled in the prison. Some, after having been so violently tormented that  
they

#### 48 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

they seemed past recovery, even though the utmost care imaginable should be taken in dressing their mangled bodies, lay in the prison deprived of all human assistance, but were so greatly strengthened by the Lord, that they comforted and encouraged the rest. Others all fresh and newly taken, whose bodies had not been yet abused, could not bear the loathsomeness of the prisons, and died there. They were not contented with the death of the Martyrs; they extended their persecution to their dead carcases. Those who had been stifled in prison, where thrown out to the dogs and wild beasts, and not suffered to be buried, in order to prevent, invalidate, and ridicule the Christian doctrine of a Resurrection."

In *Nicomedia*, *Egypt*, and various other places of the Empire, unheard of cruelties were committed during the *Dioclesian* persecution. An edict was set up, that all their Churches should be razed to the ground, and their writings burnt. That those who profess the Christian Religion should be deprived of all their honours and dignities; that they should be liable to be tortured, though they were of the highest rank and quality; that any one might sue them at law, but they might not sue any body. In consequence of this many were murdered, great numbers of every age and sex were burnt, and that not singly, but in great crowds, by setting fire round about them.

FROM EXAMPLES OF THE MARTYRS, &c. 49  
them. We are told, that there were several men and women among them, who, out of an excess of zeal, threw themselves upon the pile; others, being tied together in great numbers, by the hands of the executioners, were put into large boats, and cast into the sea, with great stones about their necks. A poor little boy of seven years old, who being asked, whether it were better to adore Jesus Christ than idols, replied—"There is but one God, and Jesus Christ is the true God"—was ordered by the judge to be scourged so cruelly before his mother, that the blood ran down from every part of him. Not one of the spectators, or even the executioners themselves, could refrain from tears. His mother encouraged him, and reprimanded him for discovering too much weakness, because he had asked for some drink. The child was thrown into prison, and afterwards sentenced to be tortured and beheaded. His mother carried him in her arms to the place of execution, and delivered him to the executioner, with the most tender and composed fortitude, but without once shedding a tear: she only kissed him, and besought him to pray for her; then held out her mantle to receive his blood and his head, which she carried away in her bosom.

In *Egypt* thousands were martyr'd at the same time; some were burnt, after having been torn with talons of iron; others were

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thrown

50 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,  
thrown into the sea; others died under torture; others were starved to death; and others nailed with their heads downwards, where they were kept till they died with hunger upon the stake. Incredible cruelties were exercised at *Thebais*, for instead of iron talons they made use of potsherds to tear the Martyrs bodies to pieces, till they expired. There were some men, whom they tied by the legs to large branches of two different trees, which they had drawn near to each other with engines: then they were let loose, in order to recover their natural situation, and at the same time tore the limbs of the Martyrs to pieces. And these cruelties, some too shocking even to mention, were exercised not for a short space, but for whole years together; while the Christians joyfully received their condemnations, and sung songs of thanksgiving to the last gasp: many of them being persons of the first rank, for their birth, reputation, and learning.

And not only then, but in after times, especially under the papal tyranny, how many have suffered with equal constancy, and not with less severity? A sensible and accurate writer of our age\* observes, that “the heathen Emperor of *Rome* may have slain his thousands of innocent Christians, but the Christian *Bishop* of *Rome* hath slain his ten thousands. There is scarce any country that

\* Dr. *Newton*, now Bishop of *Bristol*, in his third volume on the *Prophecies*.



FROM EXAMPLES OF THE MARTYRS, &c. 51  
hath not, at one time or other, been made the stage of these bloody tragedies; scarce any age that hath not, in one place or another, seen them acted." In proof of which read only "*the account of the persecutions of the Protestants in France*"\*—(which, by the way, well deserves to be read by every Protestant family, as it serves abundantly to discover the spirit of popery, which surely can never be a faith acceptable to God, when cruelty and inhumanity are the first principles of it—) read, I say, their account—and the accounts of the sufferings of the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, and of the first Reformers in *Germany*—nay, and come nearer home, read the accounts of the terrible persecutions which have been carried on in our own land—of the Martyrs who have happily confessed their divine Master—of the *Crammers*, the *Latimers*, the *Ridleys*—and all whose names disgrace the bloody reign of *Mary*—and you will rejoice that so many have been found worthy to follow triumphantly the Saviour, who bought them with his own blood; to give so strong a testimony to the faith, and to set so great an example of patient enduring.

Were we to trace this subject with greater accuracy, and to enter minutely into a detail of the lives of the best and most celebrated servants of God, in all places and times, we

\* Sold at *Waugb's* in *Lombard-Street*.

should still find that much of tribulation hath been their lot, that through seas of affliction they have made their way, and stand forth to us lively monitors to persevere; and to receive, with filial resignation and thankfulness, every dispensation of an all-wise Father, who can neither mistake nor oppose our good. And, perhaps, there is nothing which will tend, under God's grace, more to improve our minds, to influence our hearts, and stimulate our practice, than a serious attention to and diligent perusal of the lives of those blessed servants of Christ; who have approved themselves faithful to their Master, even unto death; who have fought victoriously the good, but arduous fight—and have received the crown of victory.

After the view which we have here taken, I would wish just to recal to your attention the argument which was urged at the beginning of the former section. You see how familiar with sufferings the best servants of Christ have been; and you cannot but be satisfied, that a stronger proof of the Divinity of our religion can scarcely be produced, than that which is taken from the conduct of these sufferers. For to suppose so many thousands of rational creatures dying with triumph, amidst the most horrid cruelties, without a supernatural support, and in defence of a falshood, exceeds all probability: We can never doubt, but that religion is true and of  
 God,

God, which thus enables men to triumph over themselves, and their nearest interests, to esteem the world, and all things in it as worthless and insignificant; to despise the bitterest pain, to reject the greatest happiness—to endure all things rather than forfeit the hope of the future recompence of reward!

Oh that more of their spirit rested upon us! that, blest as we are with the free profession of our faith, and with innumerable felicities, our zeal and piety witnessed our sense of these blessings! that we were less attached to these poor passing toys below—and that warned by their sufferings, there was no need of the afflicting scourge to remind us of our duty! to recal us to our God!

But when the kind hand of our Father and Redeemer applies this scourge—let us receive it submissively; let us improve by the chastisement. And while we cast our eyes on the innumerable multitude of the chosen sons of God, who have been purified in the furnace of affliction---let despondence and grief be dispelled by thanksgiving and joy---and let us esteem ourselves happy, inasmuch as we are not neglected by him, who careth for his people.

Nay, let the children of affliction, upon a review like this, say whether they would even wish to be free from tribulation---and to be neglected, as it were, by their heavenly Father?--- “Seest thou, oh happy sufferer, under

der whatever calamity thou labourest—seeft thou the triumphant Saviour, with that innumerable multitude who have followed his steps, and are come out of great tribulation! Wouldeft thou not rather choofe to fuffer here a while like them, that with them thou mayeft wear the robe of white, the crown of glory, the palm of victory, in eternal peace and reft—than enjoy the pleasure and gratifications of fin and the world unmolefted for a feafon—and after that feafon, be excluded from God and from happinefs for ever?—It is a reproach to reason even to make the comparifon. Alas, that there fhould ever be need of it, that any fhould make not the comparifon;—but the choice! Be it ours to act more confiftently; like *Mofes*, rather choofing the reproaches of Chrift, and the evils of the world, than to enjoy the pleasures of tranfitory indulgences! We have a noble and glorious company to animate us; while we contemplate them, we fhall never think heaven too dear an acquisition, though procured at the price of every thing moft valuable to us upon earth.

Look up then, lift up your faces unto heaven. Behold Chrift Jesus, and all his Saints with him, who in the world had great conflicts, but do now rejoice, now are comforted, now are feure, now are at reft, and fhall remain everlaftingly in the kingdom of his Father—and let the view ftrengthen your  
faith,

faith, confirm your hope, and encrease your patience: and thus will you be prepared, through Christ, when the solemn call shall come, to leave this realm of sorrow and trial, and to join—with

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets,

The glorious company of the Apostles—

And the noble army of martyrs---

To praise the King of heaven---and to cry continually with seraphims and cherubims, and all the angelic hosts,

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth.

Heaven and earth are full of thy glory---

Glory be to thee, O Lord, most high. *Amen.*

## S E C T. VII.

### *The Example of JOB enforced.*

**N**OTHING is more common, than for men to fancy themselves independent, and to live, as if they conceived this life the ultimate end of their existence. Mistaken and deluded! This transitory scene is only the introduction to a scene unalterable: we are only probationers here, on this stage of trial, for a state of the utmost moment,---a state of eternal bliss or woe.

Averse as we too commonly are to this knowledge, though nothing appears more plain or more reasonable, God, from his  
fatherly

fatherly care of us, is pleased frequently to lead us to it, and to perfect resignation in consequence, by the hand of affliction, and the stroke of kindly chastisement. And as the sacred Scriptures, the oracles of consummate wisdom, not only teach us what is right, but give us lively examples of it too—so in this respect, we have before us many patterns of this virtue, which may support us amidst trials, and encourage us under every difficulty. In the former sections many of these have been proposed: but that of *JOB*, set forth peculiarly in the sacred writings, as an example of suffering affliction and patience, deserves, and shall have, as we promised\*, a particular attention, for it is fraught with abundant consolation.

It is uncertain who was the author, or what was the time of writing the book of *Job*; it is generally esteemed the most antient of all the sacred books: and supposed by many, to have been written by *Moses*, under the immediate direction of God, as a lesson of patience and submission to the *Israelites*, under their afflictions. And as this is the most common, so it is the most probable opinion: at least St. *James* seems to direct us to this view of it, when he proposeth *Job* as an example of patience to all Christians;---*ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

\* See Sect. IV.

From the history we learn, that no particular defect, or sinful deviation in the conduct of *Job*, occasioned this severe trial; it was sent wholly with a design to exercise his patience and faith, and that both being found perfect, might be honourably rewarded and proposed to the imitation of future ages. And we must acknowledge, that as no *trials* could be more severe, so no faith can be imagined more firm, no patience more perfect.

To struggle with difficulties, and to wring under the burden of hardships, becomes less afflictive to those, who from their cradle have been inured to poverty and distress; who have never known the soft smile of prosperity, nor the honour and comforts of an elevated station. But to fall into poverty and distress, to drink only the cup of misery and contempt, when through all our days before we have been accustomed to the better things of life—to fall into misfortunes without any fault of our own—nay, with a virtuous and approving conscience—to fall into misfortunes which render our nearest friends shy of us; and which cause our very virtues to be suspected: this, it must be owned, is a truly afflictive and trying state—to bear up under which must require no small degree of heroic resolution. But such was the afflictive state of *JOB*. He was a great man, and a good man; upright and applauded by God himself in prosperity: and in adversity, as he had the heaviest

viest difficulties to support, so did he support them with the greatest submission.

“The beginning of his days (I use the words of a late writer\*) was crowned with every thing that ambition could wish for; he was the greatest of all men of the east;—had large and unbounded possessions, and no doubt enjoyed all the comforts and advantages of life, which they could administer.—Perhaps you will say, a wise man might not be inclined to give a full loose to this kind of happiness, without some better security for the support of it, than the mere possession of such goods of fortune; which often slip from under us, and sometimes unaccountably make themselves wings and fly away.—But he had that security too;—for the hand of providence which had thus far protected, was still leading him forwards, and seemed engaged in the preservation and continuance of these blessings. God (we read) had set a hedge about him, and about all that he had on every side; he had blessed all the works of his hands, and his substance encreased every day.—Indeed even with this security, riches to him that hath neither *child* or *brother*, as the wise man observes, instead of a comfort prove sometimes a sore travel and a vexation.—The mind of man is not always satisfied with the reasonable assurance of its own enjoyments, but will look forward; and if it discovers some ima-

\* See *Sterne's Sermons*.

ginary



ginary void, the want of some beloved object to fill his place after him, will often disquiet itself in vain, and say, "For whom do I labour and bereave myself of rest?"

This bar to his happiness God had likewise taken away; in blessing him with a numerous offspring of sons and daughters, the apparent inheritors of all his present happiness!—Pleasing reflection! to think the blessings God has indulged one's self in, shall be handed and continued down to a man's own seed! How little does this differ from a second enjoyment of them, to an affectionate parent, who naturally looks forward with as strong an interest upon his children, as if he was to live over again in his own posterity.

What could be wanting to finish such a picture of an happy man? Surely nothing, except a virtuous disposition to give a relish to these blessings, and to direct him to make a proper use of them. He had that too;—for he was (from the testimony of God himself) a perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.

In the midst of all his prosperity, which was as great as could well fall to the share of one man;—whilst all the world looked gay, and smiled upon him, and every thing round him seemed to promise, if possible, an increase of happiness; in one moment, all is changed into sorrow and utter despair!

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## 60 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION

It pleases God, for wise purposes, to blast the fortunes of his house, and to cut off the hopes of his posterity: and in one mournful day to bring this great prince from his palace down to the dunghill! His flocks and herds, in which consisted the abundance of his wealth, were part consumed by a fire from heaven, and the remainder taken away by the sword of the enemy:---his sons and daughters,--whom it is natural to suppose so good a man had brought up in such a sense of their duty, as to give him all reasonable hopes of much joy and pleasure in their future lives;---natural prospect for a parent to look at, to recompense him for the many cares and anxieties which their infancy had cost him;—these dear pledges of his future happiness were all,—all snatched from him at one blow; just at the time, when one might imagine they were beginning to be the comfort and delight of his old age, which most wanted such pleasing stays to lean on!—And as circumstances add to an evil, so they did to this; for it fell out not only by a very calamitous accident, which was grievous enough in itself, but likewise upon the back of his other misfortunes, when he was ill prepared to bear so sad a shock; and what would still add to it, it happened at an hour when he had least reason to expect it, when he would naturally think his children secure and out of danger; “For whilst they were feasting and making merry, in their eldest brother’s house, a great wind  
out

out of the wilderness smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon them."

Such a concurrence of misfortunes are not the common lot of many; and yet there are instances of some, who have undergone as severe trials, and bravely struggled under them: perhaps by natural force of spirits, the advantages of health, and the cordial assistance of a sympathizing friend. And with these helps what may not a man sustain?—But this was not *Job's* case, for scarce had these evils fallen upon him, when he was not only borne down with a grievous distemper which afflicted him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but likewise his three friends, in whose kind consolations he might have found a medicine--nay even the wife of his bosom, whose duty it was with a gentle hand to have softened all his sorrows—instead of doing this, these friends and this wife cruelly insulted and became the reproaches of his integrity! O God, what is man, when thou thus bruifest him, and makest his burthen heavier, as his strength grows less!—who that had found himself thus an example of the many changes and chances of this mortal life;—when he considered himself now stript and left destitute of so many valuable blessings, which the moment before thy providence had poured upon his head:—when he reflected upon this delightful structure, in appearance so strongly built, so pleasingly surrounded with every thing that  
could

could flatter his hopes and wishes; and beheld it all levelled with the ground in one moment, and the whole prospect vanish with it, like the description of an enchantment; who, I say, that had seen and felt the shock of so sudden a revolution, would not have been furnished with just and beautiful reflections on the occasion; and have said with *Job*, thus experiencing the vanity of all sublunary things, “That man who is born of a woman, is but of few days and full of misery; that he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not!” —But without the peculiar grace of God, who like *Job* could have said—“*Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return, thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be his name;—shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?*”

Hence we learn the greatness of this sufferer’s submission and resignation.—We do not find, that external expressions of grief are improper; or that the tenderest and most feeling sense of sorrow, is inconsistent with the highest degree of patience. *Job* rent his mantle, shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, in token of the deepest distress—yet at the same time he worshipped the Sovereign disposer of all events; acknowledged, that as he was the giver, it was but reasonable to allow him to resume his gifts, if he thought proper; his name equally merciful in all dispensations, required equal praise; whilst the

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the blessings of this life were so little worthy a fond attachment, that the least reflection would shew they must shortly all be given up;—and therefore if God should please to resume them before death,—to God should be the glory, from man should be the willing sacrifice.—Nay, suppose he should resume the good, and give evil in their stead—shall we not receive the latter with dutiful submission, as well as the former with joy? “What, may we suppose this good man expostulating, shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil also? Are not both alike the dispensations of an all-wise and good Being, who knows and determines what is *best*! And wherefore should I make myself the judge to receive the one, and yet be so partial as to reject the other? when by fairly putting both into the scale, I may be convinced how much the good out-weighs the evil in all cases? In my own, let me consider how strong this argument is against me.

“In the beginning of my days, how did God crown me with honours? In how remarkable a manner did his providence protect me, and all that I had? how he prospered the work of my hands, so that my substance and happiness increased every day?

“And now, when for reasons best known to his infinite wisdom, he has thought fit to try me with afflictions: shall I rebel against him, in sinning with my lips, and charging him foolishly? God forbid!—O rather may  
I look

I look up towards that hand, which hath bruised me: for he maketh fore, and he bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole: from his bounty only issued all I had—from his wisdom, all I have lost; for he giveth and he taketh away—blessed be his name!”

Such was the pious and heroical resignation of this chosen servant of God, of whom it is witnessed, that in all this he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. And we find, that the consequence of this resignation was remarkably happy, we *see the end and design of the Lord* in it, and are convinced that *the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy*. For we read, that the Lord blessed the latter end of *Job* more than his beginning; that he lived to an extreme old age in the greatest prosperity and affluence, and died full of days and full of peace.

### S E C T. VIII.

*Reflections on the Example of JOB.—His Arguments of Consolation recommended and enforced.*

**A** MORE striking instance of the instability of human affairs, of the vanity and uncertainty of all human enjoyments, cannot easily be produced, than that which we have offered in the last section. We see a man flourishing to-day in all the accommodations of worldly affluence and prosperity, blooming as the gayest

gayest flower of the garden, to-morrow deprived of all his felicities, reduced to the lowest ebb of misery, and, like the flower, hanging his withered head, dejected and contemned! And alas! this is but too true a representation of human life in the general, which, though perhaps it may rarely be tried with misfortunes severe and complicated as were those of *Job*, yet abounds with disappointments and vexations, with difficulties and trials, and will at length be compelled to abandon every earthly acquisition, and naked as it came, naked to depart hence and appear before its God. While we seriously contemplate this irreverfable condition of mortality, it will furely infpire us with the beft wifdom, and the moft unshaken refolution to build our dependence, and to place our confidence upon better and more folid foundations, than the fanddy bottoms of this world's goods; let it move us to build upon the never-failing rock of ages, *Chrift* the giver of life eternal to all who love and obey him.—That we may attain to refignation and humility like *Job's*, we fhall do well ferioufly to confider and attend to thofe principles upon which he built his refignation.

*Job* feems to found his refignation upon the moft folid and rational principles; principles, which rightly received, and duly cultivated, would produce the fruits of the fame refignation in every mind.

He confidered, that if God were pleased

to deprive him of every thing, it was but anticipating a little that hour, when he must necessarily be deprived of every thing—“Naked came I, says he, out of my mother’s womb, and naked must I return thither.” If, therefore, God thinks fit to take from me all I have before I die, it will only prepare me the better for that hour, when I *must* depart from all things which I have and possess in this world. And certainly this argument may be of great consolation to us under afflictions; especially if we religiously contemplate the hour of our dissolution, when, possess we ever so much, enjoy we comforts ever so many, blessed are we with friends and relations ever so dear and beloved, yet we must leave them all behind—and as we brought nothing into this world, so must we carry nothing thence.—Therefore, if by the stroke of affliction we are deprived of these, it will tend much to teach us submission, when we reflect that they are only taken from us a little before that time, when we must be compelled unavoidably to forsake them.

Another argument of consolation, which *Job* applies to himself is, God’s free donation of all he had. “*The Lord gave*—and if he gave, surely he hath a right to take away—blessed be the name of the Lord—in each be his name equally blessed! For what right had I to his gifts—they were bestowed of his own free mercy upon me. If therefore he sees, either that I misuse the gifts, or that they will



will be prejudicial to me, he surely hath a right—and he surely is good to withdraw them.”—When we improve this consideration, it will be a great source of comfort to us under every trial; for alas! when we lay our hands to our hearts, which of us must not confess, that he is unworthy, very unworthy, of the manifold gifts and blessings vouchsafed to him of Almighty God! And if Almighty God shall, in his unerring wisdom, remove any of these gifts, either take away the children, the friends, the fortune, the health, or any of the comforts we enjoy, what reason can we have to repine? What merit of ours deserved them? They were the Father of heaven’s rich bounties to us; and perchance we strangely erred, and loved the gift more than the Giver; nay, forgot the Giver, while we profanely doted on the gift. Should he then think fit to resume these gifts, and to reclaim our apostate heart;—Oh let us not murmur at his disposals, but confess him just and good in all he doth—“*the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,*” &c.

A third argument upon which *Job* founds his patience, is derived from the liberality of God in bestowing good upon his people as well as evil—“*shall we receive good, and shall we not receive evil?*” What are we, that we think felicity and blessings only our due from the hands of God? Are we then indeed so deserving of his favour? Are we so perfectly good and holy, that we merit no mixture in our cup?

Alas! there lives not a man, who is not conscious of innumerable offences in the sight of God! and yet, tho' we deserve nothing but chastisement, how graciously doth the Lord shower blessings upon us! what a profusion of good things do we all enjoy—And if we receive these, unworthy as we are, from a bountiful Father and Redeemer, shall we not, with content and acquiescence, receive and welcome those correcting evils, which are sent only in mercy; and which are productive solely of our happiness, if we are wise rightly to improve them?—No, let us stop every querulous complaining, when we drink the draught of bitterness from the mixt cup of this life; here we have neither abiding city, nor perfect happiness; this is not the lot of mortals; but we may all have that, which is next to perfect happiness, we may have *content*. This is a flower which flourishes in every soil; and if we are prudent enough to estimate properly the good and the evil of life, to receive the former with thankfulness, the latter with resignation.—Life will pass off with all possible peace and serenity, and we shall enjoy as much of felicity here, as our state is capable of affording us.

But let me observe in conclusion, that as from these arguments so effectually applied by *Job*, we may derive much comfort to our souls under affliction; so may we contemplate the end of this illustrious sufferer's trial, with the

the greatest satisfaction and improvement: *We see the end of the Lord*, says St. James, *that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* We see that, like an affectionate parent, he corrects only to amend, and having tried the fidelity and love of his child, rewards him with the highest liberality. It may indeed happen, that our misfortunes and miseries may find no recompence, may meet no alleviation, may have no end on this side the grave; God may not think fit to deal with us as with *Job*, to bless our latter end more than our beginning, nor to remunerate our temporal sufferings with temporal blessings.—But there is assuredly a mighty recompence awaiting them; if not here, yet in that celestial country, where our life unending shall be blessed indeed, blessed far beyond our beginning—where, whatever we may have endured here below, shall be recompensed.—oh how amply recompensed—with immortality, with consummate felicity!—“When therefore thy hand, O God, is upon us, when thou shalt see good, O blessed Saviour, to try and prove us in the furnace of affliction here below, we will bow our heads in humble submission—while our faith, unshaken, looks to that desired hour, when toil and care, and woe and grief shall all be laid to rest in the silent grave: and our triumphant souls, exulting over sin, over sorrow, over death, shall be admitted to thy presence, and eternally enjoy the unexhausted pleasures of thy divine love.” *Amen.* SECT.

## S E C T. IX.

*Arguments of Consolation from the Blessedness of a future State through Christ. Rev. vii. 13—17, explain'd.*

**I**N a former section \*, we promised to consider at large, as another lively and powerful argument of *consolation*, the exceeding happiness reserved for those, in a future state, who *coming out of great tribulation, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*. The whole passage in the *Revelation* †, which is remarkably beautiful and comfortable, runs thus :

*And one of the elders answered, saying, what are these, who are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? and I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they, who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his Temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

\* *See*. ii.

† Ch. vii. ver. 13—17.

It is not my intention, to enter into the prophetic meaning, and relation of these words, or to consider, to what persons and times they peculiarly belong; whether by those who came out of great tribulation, are meant the martyrs in the tenth persecution; or whether those who are described in a happy state, picture out to us the christians, in the more fortunate days of the church, from the time of *Constantine* to that of *Theodosius the Great*‡. Leaving these enquiries to men of profound speculation, enquiries, in which there is much of uncertainty, at the best; for the book of *Revelation* is a deep sea, in which many have waded so far, that they have never been able again to make the shore—leaving then these enquiries, as less useful to our present purpose we will take the words, in that plain and practical sense, which they offer to us; and which conveys the most sublime and important truths, sufficient to elevate our hopes, and support our faith, amidst all the trials and difficulties, the changes and chances of this uncertain scene.

For the great lesson here held forth to us, is, “that the school of Affliction is the school of Virtue, and that they who, exercised in it, repose their faith in, and seek for strength from, that divine Saviour, who was made perfect by sufferings—shall like him also be made perfect; shall be ad-

‡ See Dr. Newton, *Bishop of Brillol, on the Prophecies*, Vol. iii. p. 67, &c.

vanced to the consummation of honour and glory—shall be admitted to the full enjoyment of uninterrupted felicity.”

How comfortable a truth, how blessed an information to the children of men! to whom indeed without it, life would be perfectly worthless and miserable; and the load of human woes, and cares, and troubles too heavy to be supported by the shoulders of mortality! But when we wring beneath their weight; when hard and oppressive lies upon us the burden of affliction; how light and easy doth it seem, nay with what cheerfulness is it borne when we look to a master, who entered not into his glory before he had suffered; who hath dignified the suffering way; and who stands ready, with the *Palm* and the *Crown*, and the robe of splendid *white*, to receive, and array those, who tread in his steps, who suffer with him, that with him they may be glorified!

St. *John* informs us, that he saw, in vision, (for the Book of *Revelation* is *scenical* throughout) a great number of these, *a great multitude, which no man could number* of all nations and people, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with *white robes*, emblems of their justification, and holiness, their purity and advancement; and with *palms* in their hands, emblems of their complete victory and triumph.—And they cried with a loud voice, saying, *Salvation to our God, who sitteth*

sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.— One of the elders who talked with him—asked him, saying, *what are they who are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?* and I, saith St. John, supposing, that by this question he asked in order to quicken my attention to what he had to tell me, concerning them—*said to him, Sir, I conclude thou knowest, though I do not.* And he said unto me, it is true; and I would have thee observe for thine own encouragement, for that of thy brethren, and of those who may arise after thee, that “*these are they who are come out of much tribulation, which they have endured in the cause of true religion; and they have washed their robes, and made them white, as you see them, in the blood of the Lamb—that is, they owe all their exaltation and glory, not to the blood which they may have offered themselves, nor to the sufferings which they may themselves have endured—but to that most precious blood of the Lamb, which he shed for their sakes—to those meritorious sufferings, which he voluntary endured for human redemption.*”

It may be proper just to observe, that *white robes* amongst the antients, were seldom worn by any other than Kings and Priests; whence they became expressive of *honour* and *purity*. The Saints here are said to have washed their robes and made them *white* in the blood of the Lamb; which is a strong figurative expression,

expression, for the purification of their natures and their advancement to holiness, honour, and happiness, through the all-prevailing efficacy of the blood and sufferings of *Jesus Christ*.

They are purified by faith in his blood: made partakers with him in his sufferings: adorn'd through him, with righteousness, and true holiness, and admitted to glory, through his infinite merits only. In the first chapter of the *Revelation*, ver. 5. St. *John* saith, that *Christ loved us, and washed us*, that is, purified us, from our sins, from the guilt and terror of them, *in his own blood*, through the merits of his own free oblation of himself on the cross—and *kath made us Kings and priests unto God, and his Father*; which is of the same import with the expression, *clothed us in white robes*; and both declare, that through *Christ* we are admitted to the honours and holiness, the glories and purity of the celestial kingdom.

I cannot omit to remark, that the whole *merit* of the salvation of this innumerable multitude is attributed to the blood of the Lamb: not to their own blood. And as it is generally supposed, and very reasonably, that these were chiefly the Martyrs of the first centuries to which St. *John* alludes, the argument holds in its fullest extent: since, if we could conceive any service or action more meritorious than another, it is certainly *martyrdom*; and yet



yet we are informed, that so far is Martyrdom itself from being meritorious, so far are the holiest Martyrs from deriving any merit to themselves from the shedding of their own blood, that all their purity, sanctity, honour and happiness is acknowledged to be derived from and owing to the blood of the *Lamb*: for it is said—*they washed and made their robes white in his blood.*—And indeed, when we consider the high nature of his sacrifice, the sacrifice of a God incarnate, and when we consider the weakness and imperfections of our best efforts and endeavours, we cannot wonder, that all is due to, as all should be thankfully received from *Christ*, the author and the finisher of our salvation.

St. *John* proceeds, in the passage, of which I have thus far given you a paraphrase, *therefore*, being thus redeemed to God by the blood of the *Lamb*, and having been enabled to approve their fidelity to their divine Master, in the midst of the greatest extremities, they now receive a rich equivalent for all they have suffered, for *therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God*

*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

That is, they shall no longer, no more be subject to any of the evils, or inconveniences of mortality; to hunger or thirst, to cold or heat, to weariness or pain; to trouble of body, or trouble of mind: sorrow and sighing shall for ever be done away; the immortal lustre of their eyes shall ever be dimmed with a tear; the everlasting gladness of their countenances never more over-clouded with grief!

From these words, we may derive the strongest consolation, when it pleases God either to bring us or our friends into great tribulation, here upon earth; or when he thinks fit to remove, either ourselves or our friends from the trial.

I. We may, in the first place, derive hence great consolation, amidst either the afflictions of ourselves or our friends.—For whenever we are brought into tribulation, or see others exercised with it, according to the good pleasure of God; it must afford us strong support, to contemplate with the eye of faith, that vast multitude, which no man can number, who stand in perfect bliss, and highest honour before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands—*robes* made white with the blood of the Lamb, *palms* bestowed in consequence of their victory over the attacks of affliction and woe. In them we discern the triumphs of faith;  
for

for these are *they who came out of great tribulation!*—and in them we see, that *tribulation* is no mark of divine displeasure, but an happy means to unite us to God, and to advance us in the favour of the divine Redeemer.

But we must observe, that though *affliction* is not a mark of God's disapprobation, nay though full often it is the certain token of his love (*as many as I love, saith he, I rebuke and chasten*—and experience indeed fully proves it, since tribulation and distress, as we have shewn, have generally been the lot of the best and most chosen servants of God)—yet it is necessary to remark, that *affliction* considered merely in itself, is neither a good nor an evil: It becomes such only, by our use of it. If under the afflictive dispensations of God's providence, we regard neither the paternal hand which inflicts the stroke, nor the paternal love which designs our advantage in it; if ungracious and uneasy we murmur forth our complaints, and utter our morose repinings; then, the affliction intended to profit, will be disappointed of its aim, and the good we might have derived from it, will be turned into harm, and render us more obnoxious to the Almighty's judgment.

On the other side, if we see and confess the hand of our Father, in all he thinks fit to do to us, in every painful, as well as every pleasing dispensation, in every bitter, as well

well as in every sweet cup, if when he thinks good to try us, with troubles and difficulties of whatever sort, we humbly acknowledge the justness and the goodness of his dealings—acknowledge our own unworthiness, and desert of punishment; confess our sins and turn to him in serious repentance and amendment of life; confiding in the grace of *Christ* for forgiveness, and depending on his all-sufficient merits for pardon and acceptance; if thus we receive and welcome the chastising hand of our Father, our robes will then be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and purified, as in the furnace on earth, we shall receive the *palm*, and enter that blissful region, where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes.

We may therefore well contemplate those who are in the school of trial and affliction, as exercising under the love of *Christ*, the great master, for that state of consummate blessedness and glory, to which they shall be assuredly admitted, who tread in their master's steps, and like him, are perfected through sufferings; where they shall be united with that countless multitude, who are gone before in the suffering path, and who, having happily emerged from the stormy sea of tribulation, are safely landed on the celestial shore; and there, in glorious triumph, partake of all the honours and pleasures of their Father's house!

Look

Look up to them, ye children of affliction, look to that innumerable throng, whose robes are white and splendid, purified by the blood of the immaculate Lamb; whose hands bear the palms of victory, whose voices re-echo with the songs of triumph: look to them, and see the reward of their faithful, their patient indurance! They suffered here, it is true; they came out of great tribulation; but their sufferings were of short continuance. For what is the passing hour, in which they suffered here below, to the endless day of eternity, in which they are receiving, and are for ever to receive the boundless blessings flowing from the right hand of God.

Thou, oh Christian, art now oppressed with grief; affliction presseth hard upon thee with all its storms: happy Christian, be patient, be thankful! See the robe of splendid white is preparing for thee! Be thou faithful unto death, and the crown of life is ready. Thou shalt make one of that triumphant multitude, which came out of great tribulation. Amidst that multitude thou shalt find, perhaps, thy dearest friends, who are gone before thee.—There stands in bliss the father, or the mother, the brother, the sister, the friend, the husband, the wife, or the child, whom heretofore the rueful hand of sickness, and of pain, tore from thee: to whose troubles and trials thou wast a mournful witness;  
who

## 80 ARGUMENTS OF CONSOLATION,

who endured long and much, as it then appeared; yet to leave whom, to have whom then separated from thee, was like tearing away the nearest string which holds thy heart. — Take comfort and rejoice: there they are amidst that countless throng; he who sitteth on the throne, dwells amongst them; they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: they are blessed! — Improve thy own trials, that thou also may'st be blessed with them."

The information which St. *John* here gives us, of the happy state of those who came out of great tribulation, will serve also, to give us much comfort, when God shall see fit to remove either ourselves or our friends from this place of trial.

II. It is no uncommon case to find persons so truly worn and wearied out with the woes of this world, as earnestly to wish for dissolution, as anxiously to long for the stroke, which shall set them free from the sufferings of humanity. And indeed, when we take an impartial estimate of human life, we shall find but few cases, in which a continuance in existence can be very desirable; so much for the most part do the sufferings and difficulties over-balance the advantages and pleasures of this world: and so much is our present state over-charged with evils unavoidable, and with evils brought on us by our own inadvertence, imprudence, and irregularity. And I believe  
there

there are but few instances to be found of men, who after having trod this weary stage of trial and pilgrimage for several years, would wish to measure back their steps anew, and again plunge through the same sea of difficulties, on whom they have before been tost. Now as human life is thus saturating in all cases, and in many is burdensome, afflictive, and uneasy; what exceeding consolation must the soul derive, from the pleasing foresight of that eternal state of felicity, to which its departure from this world will give it admittance; when the burden of mortality shall be for ever removed; when all the wants and all the weaknesses of human nature shall be supplied, or known no more; when satiety of enjoyments shall no longer disgust; when losses, and disappointments, cares and anxieties, pains and weaknesses, anguish of body, and anguish of mind; the throbbing heart, and the tearful eye; the tender sorrows of the parent; the melancholy mourning of the widow; the desolate afflictions of the orphan, and the friendless, shall for ever be done away: and the happy children of light and love, favoured with their divine master's continual regard, shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them,—feed them with the rich repast of his love, and shall lead them unto living fountains of wa-

ters,—the never-failing supplies of grace; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!

Unspeakably blessed state! Can the knowledge of it fail to diffuse the sweetest comfort over our souls, when we contemplate that day, that important day, on which the trembling, fluttering soul, must leave its clayey habitation, leave this earthly tabernacle, a prey to corruption and worms, and enter into the presence of its God!---It cannot fail to diffuse the sweetest comfort, if the soul, at all prepared, hath *rational* grounds of acceptance with its God! And we are now supposing such a case; supposing this consolatory view before the eyes of those, who having long been tried in the school of affliction, have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, have purified their souls by faith, and put on the blessed robes of righteousness and true holiness! Are we of that number? Death hath no terrors to alarm us; for behold—in that multitude clothed in white, we see the recompence, the bliss awaiting us; and cannot fail to rejoice in a deliverance from a world of trouble, that we may enter on a state of perfect peace.

How much too will this pleasing prospect serve to repress the sigh of tender sorrow, to stop the tear of affectionate grief, when the friends and relations, dear as our own soul; yea, dearer often to us than ourselves; when



when these get the start of us in our journey to immortality, and go before us from this scene of labour, to the land of *rest* and *peace*! Humanity, perhaps, cannot, nor perhaps is there any cause that it should totally overcome the soft workings of passion, totally abstain from the language of woe, and the heart-felt throbs of concern; more generous and yielding natures too, often on such occasions, feel the most. But when reason and religion bring in their urgent persuasives, when they offer the kindly balm of consolation, and elevate our thoughts to that blissful change, which our beloved friends have found; our friends, translated from the evils of earth, to the joys of heaven: we can no longer mourn, but must congratulate their happiness, who secured from the dangers of a corrupted and corrupting state, are safely landed in a haven, where there are no storms to toss, no rocks to break, no sands to wreck and ruin their frail barks; but an eternal, an unalterable calm for ever breathes; and bears on its precious breath immortal health and uninterrupted felicity!

## C H A P. II.

## S E C T. I.

*Consolations for the afflicted Mind.*

**W**ILLING to contribute something towards the alleviation of those evils and troubles, to which our present state of trial, for wise and good reasons, is render'd unavoidably subject; and desirous to open those fountains of consolation, of which, amidst the present fluctuating scene of things, all men may be glad, sooner or later, to drink: I have endeavour'd in the former chapter, to point out, not only the *nature* and *end* of afflictions in general, but also have suggest'd some of the strongest and most prevalent motives and arguments for comfort, which the Christian religion supplies; a religion, rich in consolation; and one whose shining excellencies is, that it affords motives and considerations to patience and submission under all the changes and chances of this mortal life, superior to what any other system hath to propose, and as much more efficacious, as the divine Author of this blessed religion is more excellent than other teachers.

Having

Having thus considered the subject in the general, I shall now proceed, according to my design, to a more particular application, and shall endeavour, by the assistance of God, to offer what consolation I am able to those who are distressed, either in *mind*, in *body*, or in *estate*. And in prosecuting this subject I shall follow the order laid down by our church, (for I can follow no better) who, as she teaches us in her prayer for all conditions of men, to commend to God's fatherly goodness, all those who are afflicted or distressed in *mind*, *body*, or *estate*—so you observe she places first the afflicted in *mind*; as the troubles of a wounded spirit are more severe, than those which spring from any other causes. I shall therefore first attempt to offer some consolation to the “AFFLICTED IN MIND.”

Under which denomination I rank only those whose souls are uneasy within them, and whose spirits are cast down, and disquieted, through religious fears and scruples; through the weight of conscious guilt; the apprehensions of their distance from God, of the weakness or deficiency of their faith; their repentance; their love, or other graces. Or, those who labour under distress, and fluctuate in melancholy doubt, through an attention to some particular tenet, which they may chance to have heard strongly in-

sisted on, such as the doctrines of Election ; of instantaneous Conversion ; of the New-birth ; of Assurance, and the like ; which become a heavy burden to the minds of some, and deprive them of all the peace and quiet which springs from pure, rational, and undefiled religion.

These are the distresses of the mind, which, as it is our duty to attempt to remove, so are there good hopes that seasonable comfort and proper council will avail to remove them. As for those oppressions of soul, which arise from worldly causes, they do not properly concern our present topic ; they may be considered under our third head, troubles of *estate* or condition : and for the unhappy terrors of real melancholy, (though perhaps they sometimes have their rise from a want of serious attention to the great truths of religion,) yet do they require more medical, than spiritual assistance ; and therefore neither are they the proper objects of our regard.—We would wish to apply ourselves to those, who, solicitous for the eternal welfare of their souls,—(for to such only can the consolations of Christianity be applied ; they, who feel no solicitude on that account, cannot certainly want the satisfactions of the Gospel, as they have neither any apprehension of the torments of a troubled spirit, nor any desire for the alleviation of that greatest distress.

distress.)—Here then we can only apply to those, who solicitous for their salvation, are yet far from that serenity of mind, which it might be supposed a good conscience would supply : nay, rather, who are wounded in spirit, and who go heavily under the burden of their distress all the day long.

Some of whom tell us, “ Alas how should it be otherwise? my sins are continually before me, many in number, deep in their guilt, aggravated in their perpetration : the very remembrance of them is horrible, what then, oh what will be the punishment of them ! Can God forgive such a wretch as I am, who have nothing but guilt to offer him ; who have nothing but shame and confusion to recommend me before him.”--To such let us reply, and happy for us that the divine revelation authorizes us comfortably to reply, “ *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*” God hath provided full and free pardon for the penitent, for the humble and contrite in heart ! Very bitter things indeed are they which you witness against yourself. It is happy for you that no adversary, however severe, could plead much worse \* :--but we admit your plea ; we grant you as sinful and as unworthy as your own distressed mind represents you. Yet be as defiled as sin can make you, there is a fountain opened to

\* See *Bp. Hall's Balm of Gilead*, to which I refer once for all

the house of *David*, for all sin and for all uncleanness. Be you as leprous as that *Syrian* was of old, if you can but wash in the water of this *Jordan*, you will be clean: Be you stung unto death by the fiery serpents of this wilderness, yet if you can but raise your eye of faith to that brazen serpent, which is erected there, you cannot fail of a cure! Wherefore came the blessed son of God into the world? was it not to save sinners? you may add if you please, whereof *I am chief*; you can say no worse of yourself than a better man did before you; who in the right of a sinner, claimeth the benefit of a Saviour. Were it not for our sin, what use were there of a Redeemer?—Were not our sin *heinous*, how should it have required such an expiation, as the blood of God's eternal son? Take comfort then to yourself: the greatness of your sin will serve to magnify the mercy of the forgiver: It is greater bounty to remit ten thousand talents than an hundred pence: God will shew you that greater bounty. It is an unhappiness indeed, much to be deplored, that you have so much offended the good father of mercy: but now that you are sensible of it, now that your conscious heart proclaims you a bankrupt, utterly unable to pay, he will glorify his own mercy in freely forgiving you all this debt. All sums are equally dischargeable to the munificence of our great creditor in heaven; as it is the act of his justice

justice to call for the least, so of his mercy to forgive the greatest. Had we to do with a finite power, we should have reason to sink under the burden of our sins. But there is neither more nor less to that which is infinite. Only let your care be to lay hold of that infinite mercy which lies open to you; and as you are, a fit object for mercy, in that you are in yourself sinful and miserable enough, so endeavour to find and to think yourself (as I trust you are) a subject fit to receive this mercy; as a penitent believer, open and enlarge your heart to take in this free grace, and to close with that blessed Saviour, who came, good shepherd, *to seek and to save, nay and to lay down his life, for those who were lost*:— Humbly receive his blessings of forgiveness, salvation and peace, offer'd to penitence and faith—for hear his comfortable declaration?— *He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out— God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten son, that whoso believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.—Repent and turn to God, that your sins may be blotted out.*”

“ Comfortable words indeed, will the afflicted in mind reply; comfortable to those that can receive them: but alas! what are they to me, who am neither a *penitent* nor a *believer*: who have not grace either to repent or to believe as I ought?”— Nay but, my Fellow-Christian, why will you be so unwise  
and

and so unjust as to take part with satan against your own soul? Why will you be so unthankfully injurious to the father of mercies, as to dispute and deny those graces which his good spirit hath so freely bestowed upon you? If you were not penitent for your sins, wherefore these fears, these anxieties, these searchings of heart for them? Wherefore these sighs and these tears, which so constantly express your disquietude? It is no worldly loss which thus afflicts you; it is no bodily distemper which thus disturbs you. Doubtless then, you are sick in soul; your spirit is deeply wounded within you; and what can thus wound your spirit, what affect your soul but sin, uneasiness because of sin; and what can this concern of your soul for sin, this uneasiness of your mind for past guilt be, but real and sincere *repentance*? — *a godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of?*

Ingenious to find out arguments for self-torment, and prone to view things in the worst and most gloomy light;—the certain unhappiness of a distressed mind,—such a mind will reply to what we have offered—  
 “ True, I am sorrowful for my sin, but I fear, not upon the right foundation: I grieve for the misery which my sin hath brought upon me; not for the evil of my sin: for the punishment, not for the offence; for my own danger, not for the displeasure of my good God.”—

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We must beware, lest an undue, and improper humility cause us to doubt or deny the graces of God's spirit. While you are under temptations, you are not a proper or adequate judge of yourself. Had not your sorrow a reference to God, why would you sigh thus towards heaven—Why would your heart challenge you for unkindness in offending? Why do you lament the foulness, as well as peril of your sin? What is it that makes the act of sin to be sinful, but the offence of the divine Majesty? How then is it possible that you can be sorry that you have sinned, and not be sorry that you have offended? Tell me what is it that conscience first and chiefly suggests to you in this deep impression of your sorrow?—Is it that you shall be punished: or is it not rather, that you have sinned? And were it put to your choice, whether you would enjoy the favour of God with the extremest smart; or be in his displeasure with ease; which would you choose? Or if liberty were tendered to you, that you might freely sin without the danger of punishment; would not your heart rise at the condition, as the highest indignity to your soul? Beside fear and terror, do you not perceive a kind of secret indignation, at your misconduct, and such an hatred of your sin, that were it to be done again,—if it were possible to be hid from God and men, and if there were not an hell to avenge it—yet this  
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notwithstanding you would abhor to commit it?—All these are strong convictions of the surest grounds of your repentance, and of the wrong which you do your own soul in the unjust scruples which you raise against it.

## S E C T. II.

*Consolations for the Afflicted in M I N D,*  
*continued.*

“**B**UT if the grounds of my repentance be right, says the afflicted Christian, yet the measure is insufficient. I am sorrowful for my sins, but not sufficiently sorrowful. An effectual grief for sin should be serious, deep, hearty, intense: Mine is slight and superficial: I sigh, it is true, but my sighs come not from the bottom of an humble and broken heart: I can sometimes weep, but I cannot pour out myself into tears; I mourn, but I do not dwell upon my sorrow. I want that deep sense of guilt, which may humble all my soul before God.”  
---Comfort too may be given to this mournful complaint. For consider, (oh child of anxiety!) that you have to do with a God, who in all the dispositions of our souls, regards truth, not quantity. If he find your contrition real, he stands not upon measure. He doth not mete out our repentance by inches or by hours; nor estimate

mate our sorrow by the number of tears, as some do their devotions by the number of their beads. But where he finds sincerity of penitence, he is graciously indulgent.—Consider *David*, and acknowledge that his sin was formidably heinous: no less than adultery aggravated by deliberate murder. Yet no sooner did he, with a true contrition of heart cry, *I have sinned*, then he hears from the mouth of the same prophet who accused him, “*The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*”—You do not read of any extravagant and external signs of distress, but only of a sincere and penitent confession availing for the pardon of so grievous crimes. You are much deceived, if you think that God delights in the misery and affliction of his creatures; so far only is the grief in his peoples hearts pleasing to him, as it may tend to the salvation of their souls, in the due sensibility of their sin; and in their meet capacity of mercy.

But mistake me not, I do not by any means pretend, with the false casuists of a certain church, to flatter you with an opinion of the sufficiency of any light *attrition*, (as they term it) and of empty wishes, that you had not sinned. Without all manner of doubt, a true contrition of spirit, and compunction of heart are necessarily required to a saving repentance. And these, (were you, oh afflicted Christian! but an indifferent, an unprejudiced censurer of your own ways) you could

could not chuse but find, within yourself. Why else, these melancholy fears, these earnest longings after God?

But after all, supposing you to be such as you accuse yourself, defective in the measure of your repentance; yet say, do you rest contented in this condition? Nay rather do you not complain of it as your greatest misery? Are you not heartily sorry that you can be no more sorry for your sin? Comfort yourself then; even this, this alone is an acceptable degree of repentance: our God, whose will is his deed, accounts ours so: What is repentance but a change of *mind* from evil to good? And how sensible is this change, that you, who formerly delighted in your sin, now detest it, and yourself for it; would not for the world commit it again, and are desirous of more grief, more sorrow to express your thorough detestation! Let nothing then so influence your mind, as to render you unsatisfied with the measure of your penitence, which is accepted of your God: rather turn your eyes from your sins, and fix them upon that all-sufficient Mediator at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and see his face smiling upon the humbled soul, and his arms of mercy ever extended to receive the lowly penitent to pardon and reconciliation—for we are assured, that *being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace, wherein*

*we*

*we stand; and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

“There you say, even there is the very bitterness of my complaint; I want that faith which should give me an interest in my Saviour; and afford true comfort to my soul: I can lament, but I cannot believe; my grief is not so great as my infidelity; I see others full of joy and peace in believing; but my earthy, stony heart cannot raise me up to any comfortable apprehension of my Saviour. Neither have I any of that blessed *assurance*, whereof some speak such high and excellent things.”

With respect to this *assurance* we will speak more at large hereafter.—For the rest of your complaint let me advise you to take care, lest while you are too querulous, you prove unthankful: and lest while your humility disparages yourself, you make God a loser. Many a man may have a rich mine lying deep in his ground which he knows not of; there are shells which are furnished with pearls of great price, and are not sensible of their worth. This is your condition, you have that grace of which you lament the want; there is no judging of yourself by sense, and external comforts, especially in the time of trial; you could not so feelingly bemoan the want of faith, if you had it not. You cannot deny that you assent to the truth of all the gracious promises of God; you ac-  
knowledge

knowledge that he could not be himself, if he were not a *true* God, yea Truth itself. You cannot doubt (for you hear these promises constantly) that he hath made divine and comfortable promises to all penitent sinners. You cannot but grant, you do grant that you are sinful enough to need, that you are sorrowful enough to desire, and to receive, mercy: And surely you cannot but love yourself so well, as, when you see a pardon reached forth to raise your soul from death, to stretch forth your hand to accept and embrace it? Lo, this hand stretched forth is your faith, which so takes spiritual hold of your Saviour, that it calls not for sense and external comforts to witness. For Faith is an assent to, and a glad embracing of the precious promises of God in Jesus Christ.

Regard not then what some may tell you of sensible evidences, and assurances; can you but in a sense of your misery and want of his mercy, accept your Saviour's grace; can you but throw yourself into the arms of his goodness, can you but trust him with your soul, and repose yourself upon him for forgiveness and salvation; can you but lay yourself before him as a miserable sinner, as a fit object of his mercy; and when the profers of that mercy are made to you, can you but lay some, though weak, hold upon them: can you do this---then labour all you may for further degrees of strength daily;

daily set up your rest in the attainment, but proceed to improve, while your heart is cheered with the certain information, that even thus much faith will save your soul: *You believe*;—and he, who is truth itself, whose word is firmer than the pillars of earth, and more unshaken than the foundation of the heavens, he hath said, *whoso believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.*

“ True, you reply, I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; and that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life: neither can I deny, but that in a sense of my own sinful condition, I do cast myself in some measure upon my Saviour, and lay some hold upon his all-sufficient redemption. But my apprehensions of him are too feeble; so weak and faint is my faith, that it can afford no sound comfort to my soul.”—Be of good courage, faint not, nor be dismayed! However weak your faith, it may yet be sincere and true. Did you expect to be justified and saved by the strength, and power of the very act of your faith—you would have good reason to be disheartened with the consciousness of its weakness: But now that the virtue and efficacy of this happy work is in the object, which your faith apprehends, not in your faith itself—is in the infinite merits and mercy of your God and Saviour, (which cannot be diminished by any infirmities of yours)

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you have, on this account, good cause to take heart, and chearfully to expect his salvation.—Understand your case aright; here is a double hand which helps us towards heaven; our hand of faith lays hold upon our Saviour; his hand of mercy and plenteous redemption lays hold of us: our hold of him is feeble and easily loosed: his hold of us is strong and irresistible. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. He loves us with an everlasting love!—Comfort yourself therefore in this, with the blessed apostle, *when I am weak then I am strong*—when weak in myself, strong in my Redeemer.—Should you boast of your strength and say, *Tush, I shall never be moved*; I should suspect the truth and safety of your condition: now you perceive and bewail your weakness, none that understand the salvation of Christ, will fail to encourage and congratulate the happy state of your soul.—Be not therefore dejected with the want of your own power; but comfort yourself rather in the rich mercies of your blessed Redeemer, whose name is *Jehovah Al-shadi*—*the Lord God All-Sufficient*.



## S E C T. III.

*Consolations for the afflicted in Mind, continued.*

**I**N the last section I endeavoured to remove the burden of distress, and to obviate the uneasy scruples of those disquieted minds, which are unhappily deprived of all the comforts of religion; either through the afflictive sense of the heinousness and aggravated guilt of their sins; the melancholy apprehension of their want of repentance, of sincere and sufficient repentance; or through the dread of the total deficiency, or at least the dissatisfactory weakness of their faith. To persons under each or all of these oppressive circumstances, we found that the Gospel can minister solid and sufficient consolation. Let us now proceed to consider farther, the complaints of those, who from other causes, are distressed in mind; who either from wrong conceptions of the true religion, or from the busy innovations of the false, are led far away from that peace and pleasantness, which attend their steps, who follow that wisdom which is from above.

“Little indeed, says the mournful christian, do I experience of this pleasantness and peace; sometimes, I confess, I find my heart tolerably at ease, in a comfortable reliance on my Redeemer. Then I promise

myself better days, and am happy in the banishment of my former fears! But, alas! How soon is this scene changed? How suddenly is this clear sky over-clouded? How quickly doth the dreary gloom of my former apprehensions, my dejection and hopelessness return?"

Neither is this to be admired. For you did not imagine surely, that grace would put you into a constant and invariable condition of soul, while you are engaged in this spiritual warfare upon earth? Ours is a warfare; and so long as we live we shall have enemies, both within and without, to encounter and combat. For we wrestle not only with *flesh and blood*, but with *principalities* and *powers*; not only with inward propensities, but outward temptations to evil. Did you ever hear or read of any, the best and most chosen saints and servants of God, who were unchangeable in their holy dispositions, while they remained in this region of mutability? Consider the man after God's own heart; the man of whom it is witnessed in the oracles of infallible truth, that save only in the matter of *Uriah*, he turned not aside from any thing that the Lord commanded him all the days of his life. Consider him, and you will find him sometimes so devoutly elevated and courageous, as if the spirit of all his worthies were met in his one bosom. Another time you will perceive him so dejected and cast  
down,

down, that no one would imagine it was the King of *Israel*. Now he can say, *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore shall I want nothing; and then, Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul! and why art thou so disquieted within me, &c.* Now he can say, *I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people that have set themselves against me round about.* While at another time he sighs forth, *Lord, where are thy loving kindneses which have been ever of old? How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord! how long wilt thou hide thy face from me!* Consider again the great Apostle of the *Gentiles*; one while you see him erecting trophies, in himself, of victory to his God; *In all these things we are more than conquerors'through him that loved us!* At another time, you find him bewailing his own sinful condition; *Oh wretched man that I am, &c.* One while you find him caught up into the third heaven, and in the paradise of God: Another you hear him complain of the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, and lamenting the assault to God.—And thus will it be with you, oh Christian, more or less, so long as you continue in the frail tabernacle of the flesh. The temper of your soul, like that of your body, will be subject to vicissitudes. Should you continue always in the same state, your situation would be more suspicious. When therefore the inclinations of your soul are happily raised to God, be thankful to the munificence of that blessed

spirit, from whom proceed all good desires, and who is the fountain of all grace and consolation. But when you find a more dark and dejected gloom over whom you, be not too much cast down with an unguarded opinion, that you are left destitute, that you are forsaken of God! Repine not at the seasons or measures of his bounty. That most free and beneficent agent will not be confined to our terms, but will give what, and when, and how he pleases. Only do you humbly wait upon his goodness, in the best performance of duty you can, and *“be confident, that he who hath begun his good work in you, will perform it even to the day of Jesus Christ.”*

“True, says one, I could gladly thus wait; and should have no doubt, that he would finish his work, if that work were indeed begun in me. But this I am led absolutely to disbelieve, and on that account am on the brink of despair; for I am positively told, that every true convert, every real Christian and child of God, can evidently set forth, can plainly tell the time, the place, the means, the manner of his conversion; can shew how near he was brought to the gates of death; how close to the very verge of the bottomless pit, when God, as it were, with a violent and outstretched arm, suddenly rescued him from that damnation; and put him into a new state of spiritual and undoubted life. Now as I am a stranger to all this, can neither note  
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the time, place, means, nor manner of my conversion, as I know not of any such forcible and irresistible operation of God's spirit upon me, nor have felt such sudden and vehement concussions of heart and spirit; I fear that I am yet no Christian; no true convert; not born again, and consequently in no hopes of eternal life."

This doctrine, for its absurdity, falshood, and danger, might deserve the roughest treatment; but as we are proposing comfort to the troubled mind, we will handle it with all mildness. To the Christian then, under this oppression, we observe that it is not safe for any man, (how holy or excellent soever) to take upon him to set limits to the ways of the Almighty, or to prescribe certain rules to the proceedings of infinite wisdom. That most free and all-wise Being will not be obliged always to walk in one path, but will vary his course according to the good pleasure of his own will. One man he calls suddenly; another leisurely; and as if it were by degrees. One by a kind of holy violence, as he did *St Paul*; another by gentle and sweet sollicitations, as *Philip, Nathaniel, Andrew, Peter, Matthew*, and the rest of the Apostles. One man he draws to heaven with gracious invitations, with cords of love; another he drives thither by a strong hand, and with all the terrors of affliction. We have known those who have mispent their  
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their younger times in notoriously lewd and debauched courses, who have been singularly wicked, being not only *without* God in this world (as the Apostle speaks) but even against him;—who yet by the power of God have been awakened to a sense of their guilt; their convictions for which have been fearfully oppressive, before they have experienced any comforts from the glad tidings of mercy in Christ. But this is not every man's case: Those who from their infancy have been brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, who continually have heard precept upon precept, and reaped all the advantages of reiterated instruction; who have, by an insensible conveyance, received the operations of the spirit of God, and have endeavoured to obey his laws, with their best and sincerest efforts, (though not without much inward strife, not without many temptations, and much humiliation for their many particular failings) Persons like these cannot expect to find so sensible alterations in themselves. As well may the child know when he was naturally born, as these may know the instant of their spiritual regeneration. As well may they perceive the growth of the herbage of the field, as expect to perceive the insensible encrease of Grace. It is enough that the child attaining to the use of reason, now knows that he was born; it is enough, that when we see the grass higher than when we left

left it, we know, that it is grown. Let it then suffice you, oh Christian, to be satisfied, that the thing is really done, though you cannot, by any means, define the time and manner of doing it. Be not curious in the matter of particular perceptions, while you may be assured of the reality and truth of the grace, wrought in you. Trust God with yourself, and let him alone with his own work; what is it to you, which way he thinks best to bring about and perfect your salvation!

“Yes, say you, I could well be content to do so, but I am told, that *assurance* is essential to true faith, and that there can be no saving faith without it, without a certain and internal persuasion, that I am in favour with God. Now, tho’ through a reliance on the infallible truth of God, I have no doubt that he will, for Christ’s sake, be merciful to me a penitent sinner,—yet I cannot say certainly that I know, and am *assured* my sins are forgiven:—I have not this happiness, and therefore I am taught to esteem myself no better than a reprobate.” What we said in the former section, in answer to the complaint of want of faith, may properly be applied here; and it is a sufficient answer to this uneasy scruple; as it appears abundantly from thence, that there are degrees in faith, which, however weak and feeble, may yet be true and acceptable before God.—But frequently and earnestly as this false doctrine is preached by some, it requires rather more  
attention

attention from us to offer an antidote. And for this purpose I shall use the words of Bishop *Hall*, who, it is well known, was not ill inclined to this tenet, qualified in some degree. “ Yet, says he, It is an uneasy and perilous path, which those men have walked in, who have defined all faith by assurance. Should I lead you that way, it might cost you a fall. So sure a certainty of our constant and reflected apprehension of eternal life, is both hard to get, and not easy to hold immoveably; considering the many and strong temptations which we are subjected to in this vale of misery and death. Should faith be reduced to this trial, it would yet be more rare than our Saviour hath foretold it. For as many a one boasts of such an assurance, who is yet deficient in a true faith, (embracing a vain presumption instead of it) so many a one also hath true faith in the Lord Jesus, who yet complains to want this *Assurance*.”—Thus far the Bishop.—But we may go yet farther, and say, that it is impossible faith can consist with this *Assurance*. For *Faith*, in its very highest actings, is not *sense* and *certainty*: As soon as it is, it ceases to be *Faith*. The moment I am undoubtedly assured of a thing, I no longer *believe* it; for then I am *certain* of it. *Faith* and *certainty* or assurance thereof can never subsist together. We may apply to faith, what the Apostle saith of Hope, *Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?*



for? So what a man is certainly assured of, why need he, how can he believe it? I am *assured* that the sun shines: then I do not *believe* the Sun shines. Under this consideration, the opinion is destroyed root and branch: for when the propagators of this doctrine tell us, that assurance is essential to all true faith, we may reply, that two contraries can never subsist together. *Faith* is an ascent of the mind, given upon evidence to any proposition. *Assurance* is the clear and undoubted knowledge of the thing by whatever means attained: if then we *believe*, we cannot be *certain* at the same time. Let me moreover observe, (that we may give all possible satisfaction to the mind, in this case,) that the most sanguine espousers of this tenet, will not, cannot deny, that the fruits of faith, are incontestible evidences of the truth of faith. If therefore you find in yourself the blessed fruits of living faith; be not solicitous about that assurance, which is supposed by some to be the first step in vital Christianity: in the works of humility, love, devotion, obedience, wrought upon your soul, and exemplified in your life, you have indeed an *assurance*, which is infallible; for it is founded upon that truth of God, which is more immoveable than the everlasting hills.

The same reply may be offered to the soul distressed and disquieted by the notions, which some vent respecting the doctrine  
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of Regeneration, or the new birth.—Not long since a person came to me, with a face of agony and despair, utterly distressed in mind, and hopeless of his spiritual state—for he had heard a sermon from a celebrated divine, in which he had insisted much upon the necessity of the new birth, but most of all upon the pangs and agonies which every Christian must suffer in their new creation.

To such a person, it was in vain to offer the distinctions, as commonly, as justly made, respecting regeneration; or to endeavour to prove, according to the doctrine of our own and of the primitive church, that baptism is regeneration.—It was therefore shewn, that this opinion had no foundation in scripture; that there are no texts, which either inculcate or support it; that it is at best but a metaphorical expression, for repentance to newness of life; and that metaphors should never be stretched beyond certain bounds; for if they are, the greatest absurdities might be deduced from them; but that if they are pursued, their analogy should be preserved; the contrary of which is observable, in the present case; for if the metaphor were duly preserved, certainly it is not the *child*, but the *parent* which feels the pangs at the birth. The Christian, therefore, the new-born Christian, according to this, should experience no sorrows or pains.—St. *Paul* seems to countenance this expression, when he saith of himself,

self, *my little children, of whom I travel in birth.*----But most satisfactory to remove all distress of mind, which this opinion may cause, is it to remark, that the espousers of it always lay down certain marks of true regeneration, nor can they deny, that where these marks are found, the soul is certainly new born, and a partaker of Christ's redemption. And these marks are generally no other, when divested of their obscurity, and reduced to order, than the ordinary workings of the spiritual life, than the graces and fruits of the gospel, than sincere obedience to the commands of Christ;----Where that obedience, and these fruits are secured, that soul may take comfort to itself, as being certainly assured of the reality of its new birth: yea, much more certainly, and I am sure more rationally, than if it had felt greater agonies and pangs, than the fancy of the wildest Enthusiast could suggest.

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S E C T. IV.

*Consolations for the Afflicted in Mind, concluded.  
With a Letter.*

“ **A**LL this may be very true, says an afflicted soul, and I could be well satisfied with it, were I only ascertained of one great particular, of my *election* to eternal life----I could

could be patient, so I might be sure. But wretched man, that I am, here, here I stick! I see others walk confidently and comfortably, as if they were in heaven already: whereas I droop under a continual diffidence, raising unto myself daily new argument of my distrust. Could my heart be settled in this certainty,—were I assured, that I am one of those whom God hath elected to life, nothing could ever make me other than happy.”

As for those you mention, who walk so confidently and comfortably, perhaps, their false confidence may be the ground of as false a comfort; for depend upon it, there is no path in Christianity wherein there is more need of treading warily than this.—You believe the doctrine of particular election and reprobation, that is, you believe that God from eternity hath infallibly decreed some to salvation, and some to destruction. I will not at present dispute this doctrine with you. You are firmly persuaded of its truth, and only wish to be ascertained of the certainty of your own election.—Now tell me, in what method you would be ascertained? There are but three supposable ones—The *first*, by getting a sight of that book of decrees, in which you imagine God to have entered yours and the names of all mortals that ever have or shall exist. This would be a very sure, but, unhappily, it is an impossible method. The *second* way to be ascertained of this fact, is by

a bold presumption, a strong confidence in your own mind. Imagine but yourself, if you can, one of God's servants; work up your self-love to a proper pitch, and you may then prevail upon yourself perhaps to entertain this belief with some degree of assurance. This is a method, which it is to be feared is not very uncommon, but it will be found very little satisfactory, to an humble and reasonable mind, desirous of avoiding all self-deceit.

The *third* then is the only method, by which solid satisfaction can be attained, and that is, by impartially consulting that word of God, which is the fair transcript of his mind, and consequently the immediate counterpart of that book of decrees, which some tell us, (though upon what grounds, I know not) he hath in heaven. Now we learn, without the least cloud of doubt, with the highest certainty, that they who have true faith, and sincere love, are the children of God, and consequently of the number of the elect; for we read, *He who believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life: and again, we know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that hath the Son of God, hath life.*—Now then, as you can be ascertained of your *election* no other way, than by the word of God; surely you cannot hesitate to take comfort, if you perceive in yourself, those sure evidences of election, which that word  
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propofeth. Indeed the moft ftrenuous favourers of this doctrine, when you come to the proof, refer you to that chain of caufes and effects, whereof *effectual calling* is the firft link, according to them, as *faith* is the grand connecting one, and *love* the final. They refer you to what other Divines would call the fruits of the fpirit; and in fhort, direct you to that which is the alone certain criterion in this and every other doubt, the book of God, and the book of your own confcience. A very eminent writer amongst them, hath thefe words immediately directed to our prefent fubject.---

“ I doubt not you find in yourfelf thefe un-failing evidences of your election: for are you not *effectually* though not *perfectly* (*ſuch is their diſtinction*) called out of the world, and corrupt nature; do you not inwardly abhor your former finful ways; do you not think of what you were, with deteſtation? Do you not heartily deſire and endeavour to be in all things approved of God, and conformed to your Saviour? Do you not gladly caſt yourfelf upon the Lord Jeſus, and depend upon his free all-ſufficiency for pardon and ſalvation? Do you not love that infinite goodneſs, who hath been ſo rich in mercies to you? Do you not love and bleſs that goodneſs, which appears in his ſaints upon earth? In plain terms, do you not love a good man, becauſe he is good? Comfort yourfelf then in the Lord; let no fits of fear or diſtruſt poſſeſs your ſoul;

faithful

faithful is he who hath called you, who will also preserve your body, soul, and spirit blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus you see, without entering at all into controversy, or particularly examining the doctrine, you may easily be exempted from the least uneasiness on this head; and may, with the most comfortable satisfaction, reply to every doubt respecting election, which the suspicious of an anxious or oppressed mind may suggest. And take it for your comfort, that as God is holy, just and good, so no man, who endeavours to be holy, just, and good, and reposes himself with an humble confidence on his Redeemer, can ever fail to attain the favour, and to see the face of that God in glory.

"But alas, continues the humble afflicted Christian, my graces are so weak and deficient, that I am led almost to doubt, whether I shall ever see that face of God, as I am so unworthy his mercies."—This complaining, be assured, is no unfavourable sign. Think you, that those, whom you esteem more eminent in grace, make not the same complaint with you? Certainly they never had any grace, who did not complain of too little. The very complaint of weakness argues not only reality but strength: as on the contrary, an opinion of sufficient grace, is an evident conviction of meer emptiness. But suppose you was even as poor, and deficient, as your

worst fears represent you,—you must remember, that it is not so much what we have, as what we improve. Had that servant in the Gospel, who received but one talent, improved it to the gain of a second, he had been proportionably as well rewarded, as he who with five gained ten. Besides, small though your grace, yet it may be true; and as all we have proceeds from God, he knows we can have nothing, but what he gives us, and enables us to improve; and where he sees our wills and endeavours are not wanting, he is ready to accept and to crown his own gifts in us. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.

“ But you are uneasy, that you make so slow a progress in grace, and spiritual improvements.”—Why this indeed, is an happy ambition, which thus carries you on to the way of blessedness. Quicken yourself all you may in that happy path; but know, that the most speedy is not always the surest course. Blessed is the man, we are told, who doth but *walk* in the law of the Lord. While you move forwards, though with the slowest pace, you are every step nearer to glory,—so long as you advance and gain ground, though never so little, you are safe.—For though you gain but little, though your improvements are but small, yet you wish and labour for more. This is a good beginning, of your heavenly wealth, which no one can miss, who with earnestness



ness of desire, and sincerity of endeavour, labours to attain it. *If any one want wisdom, heavenly grace, we are told by an apostle, He must ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and in consequence of such sincere request, that wisdom shall be given him; shall be given more especially to such a soul, as is sensible of its want, poor in spirit, and lowly in its own eyes.—For know, that in a spiritual as well as temporal view, an humble poverty is better than an haughty fulness; were you poor and proud, there were no hopes of your proficiency: but when you are meaner in your opinion, than in your estate, who can more justly appropriate our Saviour's blessing; Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.—You are weak in grace, but you may gain more strength; wherefore serves that heavenly food of the word and Sacrament, but to nourish your soul to eternal life? Do but hear and receive in faith, and you cannot but grow stronger. God will not be wanting to you in an increase of grace, if you will not be wanting to yourself. He offers his spirit to you with the means; it is your sinful neglect if you attempt to separate them: you know in whose hands is the benediction: pray that he whose loving-kindness is over all his works, would not forget you, while you entreat in the pathetic style of Esau,—Hast thou but one blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me, also, O my Father!*

It is our unspeakable comfort, that we have to do with a God, who is not circumscribed in his bounty, or limited in his blessings---- who hath enough for all, and from whose boundless store, no supplicating soul shall ever be sent empty away. In this and the former Sections, we have seen, how abundant consolation is ministred to us, through the rich mercies of our father in Christ Jesus; in-  
somuch, that if we can but bring the humbled heart, the ardent desire, the sincere endeavour, past offences shall be no bar to our admission, weakness and imperfection shall not cut us off from the mercy of our God:---as a father pitieth his own children, so will he have compassion upon us; and upon our filial acknowledgements and penitential return to him, far as the east is from the west, high as the heaven is from the earth, will he graciously put away our sins from us! What a comfortable declaration to imperfect sinful creatures like us! Let it influence our minds to every worthy and grateful sentiment, and let us not by any means proceed to offend that infinite, that amiable love, which condescended to die for us, rather than we should die in our sins!

Thus then, have I endeavoured, in as familiar a manner as I am able, to remove those scruples, and to obviate those difficulties, which arise either from wrong conceptions of the true, or dangerous doctrines of false religion.  
There

There are two conclusions which are naturally to be drawn from what hath been said—

Ist. The first, respects the necessity there is of gaining the most clear and perfect knowledge we are able of the Christian religion, lest we be led astray by every glare of false doctrine, and have our minds continually harrassed with perplexing principles, calculated to deceive and ensnare unwary and unstable souls. I do not pretend to assert that the Church of England is either infallible or free from errors,—but thus much may be advanced, without the least hazard of truth, that therein are held and taught all the essentials of Salvation; and it will be our best and wisest method conscientiously to adhere to this Church, as she adheres to the word of God, and to receive no doctrines, which are not evidently and undeniably proved to be hers. If we thus act, (I speak only of those who are of this Church, and have neither leisure nor education sufficient to examine minutely into things,) we shall be preserved in a much safer course, than by following the sound of every tinkling cymbal, which proclaims some new thing to our ears: and we shall find in the end, that we are much more advanced in Christianity, than those, of whom it may be said, as of *Reuben, unstable as water, ye shall not excel.*—Indeed, were it not for this, yet the peace and calm of our minds should certainly lead us to prefer that steady and uniform piety, which the true religion,

## 118 CONSOLATIONS *for*

as held by the Church of *England*, recommends; rather than to hazard our present tranquility, and our future hopes, by espousing the tenets of uncertainty and disquietude.

IId. And as the subjects which we have been considering, strongly enforce the necessity of right knowledge and of stability in our sentiments; so do they particularly display the importance of a good life, and the unspeakable comforts flowing from an exemplary demeanour, and an approving conscience. Indeed, without these, or an endeavour to attain these, the Christian religion hath no consolations to offer. And it is pleasing to remark, that the abettors of every doctrine, however false, or absurd, have generally, if not universally recourse to the fruits of an holy life, as the uncontested mark of the real influence of their principles upon the soul. If you have this, you have an evidence of your Sonship and adoption into the family of God, which will avail you, under every temptation. And if you want this, though you can talk with all the confidence of a saint, concerning your assurance, new-birth, or election, depend upon it, your confidence is presumption, your hope is delusion, your end will be despair.

Labour therefore to attain this great resolver of doubts, “a conscience approving the rectitude of your conduct.” Labour to excel in  
virtue

virtue and godliness of living, and you have, as it were, the broad seal of Heaven to assure you, that grace is begun in your souls, and that you are in the path, which leads directly to unending glory! Firm in your faith, zealous in your obedience, universal and sincere in your love, you may stand and brave all the tempests of sin, the world, and the devil, whose attacks will prove fruitless as the vain dash of the angry billows against the immoveable rocks.

Let parents then early instruct their children, and season their minds with a right knowledge of religion: let masters carefully edify their families, by every means in their power: let ministers diligently, plainly, and faithfully preach the sincere word of God, and thus disperse the pure doctrines of the Gospel; and we shall see that desirable fruit produced in abundance, the fruit of holy and exemplary living, which will prove, through the faith of Christ, an effectual barrier against the inroads of infidelity, superstition, or enthusiasm; which will tend above all things to silence or wholly remove the uneasy solicitude of a distressed mind; which will introduce all the soft harmony of celestial peace, and all the chearful vivacity of holy hope, into the happy and heaven-directed heart.

We subjoin at the end of this *head* and *section* a letter, written to a person uneasy in mind, and which perhaps may be acceptable to others in the same situation.

*To Mr. \*\*\*.*

‘ ASSURE yourself, dear Sir, it would give  
 ‘ me the highest satisfaction, if I could  
 ‘ by any means contribute to the restoration of  
 ‘ your peace of mind. But as yours is un-  
 ‘ doubtedly a bodily, as well as a mental  
 ‘ complaint, physical methods are to be pur-  
 ‘ sued; and it is hoped, by the blessing of  
 ‘ God, and by proper patience, they may  
 ‘ at length prove efficacious.---In the mean  
 ‘ time I most sincerely sympathize with you  
 ‘ in your distress, which, we trust, by serious  
 ‘ reflection and rational conversation, may in a  
 ‘ degree be alleviated, if not perfectly removed.

‘ You are no stranger to that great, that  
 ‘ blessed design, which brought the Son of  
 ‘ God into our wretched world; it was solely  
 ‘ to *save* and to *restore* lost and ruined sinners.  
 ‘ Accordingly you find, that this beneficent  
 ‘ Saviour breaths nothing but mercy and  
 ‘ love, sweet promises of grace and of pardon,  
 ‘ to all who will come, in faith to him, and  
 ‘ accept his gracious offers. *All manner of*  
 ‘ *sin and blasphemy*, he hath assured us, *SHALL*  
 ‘ *be forgiven unto men.*---He declares, *that he*  
 ‘ *came to call not the righteous, but the SINNERS*  
 ‘ *to repentance*---and *to the weary and heavy*  
 ‘ *laden*, under the burden of guilt and distress  
 ‘ *he offers his invaluable rest.*

‘ Upon this view you see, (and surely it  
 ‘ must give you comfort to see) that you are  
 ‘ in the proper state to *come* to this merciful  
 ‘ Lord of love. You are heavy-laden and  
 ‘ weary;

‘ weary; you are oppressed with the sad re-  
 ‘ membrance of sins.—Why then, you are  
 ‘ the very person Christ came to save: you  
 ‘ want his salvation. And in return let me  
 ‘ ask—Hath he not abundantly shewn, by  
 ‘ his marvellous doings, that he wants you?  
 ‘ or, in other words, that he earnestly de-  
 ‘ sireth, and will joyfully receive the return-  
 ‘ ing sinner! *There is joy in heaven over one*  
 ‘ *sinner that repenteth!*

‘ Nay but say you, “I am so grievous a  
 ‘ sinner—a sinner against light and con-  
 ‘ viction—guilty beyond all the guilty upon  
 ‘ earth.” Admit all this; it is no bar to  
 ‘ your forgiveness. “*All manner of sin and*  
 ‘ *blasphemy.*”—Note the expression—*All man-*  
 ‘ *ner shall be forgiven, &c.*—what says God by  
 ‘ his prophet *Isaiab*? *Though your sins be as*  
 ‘ *scarlet*—deep in their dye as *crimson*; nu-  
 ‘ merous as the stars; they shall be all  
 ‘ blotted out, and become *white* as the purest  
 ‘ snow, through the grace procured for us by  
 ‘ him, *who hath loved us, and washed us in his*  
 ‘ *own blood.* *David’s* sins were aggravated  
 ‘ by every condemning circumstance, yet he  
 ‘ found mercy; there is the same mercy for  
 ‘ you

‘ “True, you will tell me, I know that God  
 ‘ is equally merciful now, and willing to save  
 ‘ those, who can perform the necessary condi-  
 ‘ tions.—But I cannot perform them.” No;  
 ‘ why, what are these conditions, but faith and  
 ‘ repent-

‘ repentance? now I know you believe; you  
 ‘ told me, you had no doubt that Christ really  
 ‘ came into the world, lived and died at *Jeru-*  
 ‘ *salem*, to save sinners.—“ But you have no  
 ‘ repentance.”—What then is repentance, but  
 ‘ the mind’s sincere sorrow for, its utter detes-  
 ‘ tation of past sin; its *resolution* and actual en-  
 ‘ deavour to amend. That you are sincerely  
 ‘ sorry for past transgressions, I am ready to an-  
 ‘ swer; I wish, my good Sir, I had not seen so  
 ‘ melancholy a proof, as your afflicted mind  
 ‘ has given me. That you detest sin, is no less  
 ‘ obvious; that you have both resolved and  
 ‘ forsaken it, (that especially which seems to  
 ‘ wound you nearest) is a matter that will ad-  
 ‘ mit of no doubt. What then can be want-  
 ‘ ing to perfect your repentance?

“ Oh much, very much, you tell me; you  
 ‘ have many passions rising up, and distressing  
 ‘ you: you are impatient, and hasty, worldly-  
 ‘ minded, and dissatisfied—far, very far from  
 ‘ the true christian temper.”——Remember  
 ‘ what I observed at the first, that your com-  
 ‘ plaint is in part *bodily*: this very complaint  
 ‘ occasions a degree of impatience, for which  
 ‘ you are no more accountable, than a man  
 ‘ in the delirium of a fever is accountable for  
 ‘ his words or actions. Besides, these tem-  
 ‘ pers have not the concurrence of your *will*;  
 ‘ you disapprove and detest them, and would  
 ‘ rejoice to be free from them—would re-  
 ‘ joice more than the captive in delivery from  
 ‘ the



‘ the dungeon. Be not then discouraged: in  
‘ such a case they are no more your actions  
‘ than mine. Only do your best against them:  
‘ and doubt not, your redemption from them  
‘ will draw nigh. Besides, let me observe to  
‘ you, that if you fancy you shall never be  
‘ happy, till you are entirely delivered from  
‘ these corrupt inclinations, you greatly de-  
‘ ceive yourself; since, it is to be feared, they  
‘ remain in a degree even in the very best of  
‘ christians; and as ours is a continual warfare,  
‘ we must have enemies to encounter, till that  
‘ happy day, when we shall rest from all our  
‘ labours, and never more be familiar with sin  
‘ and with sorrow.

‘ But how can you expect to make any to-  
‘ lerable progress in grace, (you say) or ever  
‘ to gain any advantage over your spiritual  
‘ enemies; when you cannot use any of the  
‘ means; when you have no power to pray—  
‘ when you are all deadness and woe!”

‘ Your unhappy disorder makes you see  
‘ all things in a black light, as men in the  
‘ jaundice see things yellow: you *do* pray;  
‘ I have heard you pray; pray fervently,  
‘ sincerely, effectually. For what is prayer  
‘ but the soul’s desire elevated to God! And  
‘ how anxiously is the desire of your soul  
‘ raised to him.—Oh! how do you long and  
‘ wish, that he would have mercy upon *you*,  
‘ a sinner; restore you to his favour; and  
‘ lift up once again the light of his heavenly  
‘ coun-

‘ countenance upon you. Be satisfied, this is  
 ‘ prayer, and such as will be heard, for Christ’s  
 ‘ sake. Do not therefore make yourself un-  
 ‘ easy, if when upon your knees, or when  
 ‘ applying yourself more formally to the im-  
 ‘ mediate act of devotion, you find your mind  
 ‘ unsettled and troubled; compose it as well  
 ‘ as you can; but never doubt, that the man  
 ‘ prays truly, who desires earnestly, and en-  
 ‘ deavours sincerely.

“ I do indeed desire, you confess; and  
 ‘ would give the universe to be restored to  
 ‘ my former peace and repose of conscience;  
 ‘ and I would hope that God will hear my  
 ‘ prayer.—But why, (tormenting reflection)  
 ‘ why does he leave me so long in this bitter  
 ‘ distress? Surely he has utterly abandoned  
 ‘ and cast me off; I am rejected for ever.”

‘ Dear Sir, I was grieved at my heart to  
 ‘ hear you make such reflections. Do not,  
 ‘ I intreat you do not indulge them; for they  
 ‘ are wrong and injurious both to God and  
 ‘ yourself. His ways, though frequently too  
 ‘“ mysterious for our narrow discernment, are  
 ‘ always of perfect wisdom: be assured, he  
 ‘ has good reasons for this severe chastise-  
 ‘ ment, which you will hereafter see and  
 ‘ adore. He never punisheth for his pleasure,  
 ‘ but always for our profit.—You seem de-  
 ‘ serted by him: tell me, Do you think he  
 ‘ deserted the forerunner of his son, the vir-  
 ‘ tuous *Baptist*—do you think he deserted the  
 ‘ laborious *Paul*—the divine *St. John*?—No  
 ‘ surely;

' surely; yet reflect, how these were left to  
 ' struggle with the severest difficulties, in long  
 ' and wearisome banishment and imprison-  
 ' ment? Nay, and consider that his only  
 ' begotten and dearly beloved Son was left  
 ' to the rage of murderers, and transfixed to  
 ' a cross—where—wonderful to think---he  
 ' uttered the astonishing cry, *My God, my God,*  
 ' *why hast thou forsaken me!*---Think of these,  
 ' and you will find that the heaviest trials,  
 ' and apparent neglect, are no proofs that  
 ' God hath given us up. Think of these, and  
 ' you will submit with more cheerfulness to  
 ' the hard and painful affliction, wherewith  
 ' you are *tried*, as gold is tried in the fire.  
 ' May you come out perfectly purified!

' Under every disponding thought, I always  
 ' find that a reflection on God's inexhausted  
 ' love gives me the most comfort. I cannot  
 ' think of his mercies, free, unmerited, and  
 ' unbounded; without the most animating  
 ' hope. If you would only endeavour con-  
 ' stantly to turn your thoughts on this hea-  
 ' venly subject, I persuade myself, it would  
 ' give you consolation, *The Lord is loving*  
 ' *unto every man*, we are told, *and his tender*  
 ' *mercies are over all his works.*--*To every man,*  
 ' ---note--- *over all his work,*---consequently  
 ' he is *loving* and his *tender mercies* are over  
 ' *you.*---*As a father pitieth his own children, so*  
 ' *is he merciful to them that fear him.* Can  
 ' you then conceive that this compassionate  
 ' Father will reject you his child, this afflicted  
 ' child.

‘ child, who therefore claim his peculiar care ?  
 ‘ for parents are always most attentive to those  
 ‘ of their children, who are in any sorrow or  
 ‘ trouble; we leave the ninety and nine to  
 ‘ seek the one that was lost.—Can you con-  
 ‘ ceive, that this infinitely gracious God can  
 ‘ take any pleasure in the death or misery of  
 ‘ his creatures ? No; surely no; he is love :  
 ‘ he is goodness itself. *As I live*, saith the  
 ‘ Lord, *I have no pleasure in the death of a*  
 ‘ *sinner—turn ye, turn and live!* And have  
 ‘ not his actions towards us verified his words !  
 ‘ He hath not only spoken, but sworn (*As I*  
 ‘ *live*) not only sworn, but sealed the cove-  
 ‘ nant with *blood*, even the blood of his own  
 ‘ eternal Son, whom, (so doth he love us  
 ‘ miserable creatures) he sent into the world  
 ‘ to die for us, that we might live through  
 ‘ him !

‘ Thus, dear Sir, I have offered a few ar-  
 ‘ guments of comfort to you: God of his infi-  
 ‘ nite mercy make them effectual, and by his  
 ‘ blessed spirit sanctify them to the use and be-  
 ‘ nefit of your soul. This will be an unspeak-  
 ‘ able pleasure to me; and if I have omitted any  
 ‘ thing, or you would wish me to speak on  
 ‘ any other head, freely communicate your  
 ‘ thoughts, and you shall as freely receive my  
 ‘ best and well-meant endeavours.

‘ I must just add, that in running over  
 ‘ your letter, I find many of my observations  
 ‘ much confirmed: you tell me, that you cry  
 to

to God for mercy, and most earnestly implore his assistance, &c.—and you conclude it with a fervent petition.—Rest happy then; God never yet rejected the prayer of any sincere soul. Your prayers will arise acceptable before him. He who prays earnestly, is certainly in the right way. It is said of *Paul*, as the most favourable circumstance, *Behold he prayeth*.—The passages you speak of in the Liturgy are extremely comfortable, and you do well to apply them to yourself. The introductory texts of Scripture; the confession and absolution; and those also in the Communion service, are most consolatory to the soul, and cannot be too carefully treasured up. You confess “yourself extremely sorry and troubled at your many sins;” this is a sure mark of real penitence. “Black despair has seized you, you say, and you fear God has given you up to the fury of your unruly passions.” This fear is the consequence of that despair; which *despair* proceeds from your bodily disorder affecting your mind. God never gives up any man, who does not finally and totally give up him. He has no pleasure, he desireth not the death of a sinner; if he had given you up, you would not have these earnest desires, these infallible marks of living grace. Hardened sinners are never uneasy at sin; a callous conscience never feels. I doubt  
not

‘ not you are in a state of favour with God;  
 ‘ and should not hesitate to pronounce you  
 ‘ happy, if it were to please him to take you  
 ‘ hence, in your present state. May his good  
 ‘ spirit be your comforter, for his dear Son’s  
 ‘ sake! I am, dear Sir,

‘ Very sincerely yours, &c.’

## S E C T. V.

*Consolations for Persons under Temptation —  
 The Right Notion of Temptations stated.*

**A**FTER having offered relief and comfort to the *troubled mind*, in various particulars; I come now to consider the case of those, who lament the prevalence and deplore the almost irresistible importunity of *temptations*. By means of which many minds are oppressed with continual disquietude; and being constantly incited to sin, are constantly harrass’d with perplexing fears and scruples. It may be necessary to be observed here again, that these consolations can only be applied by the true Christian, by the sincere penitent; since neither the cause of complaint, nor the source of comfort belong to them who live without God in the world, and have neither his terrors nor his mercies in their thoughts.

*Temptations,*

*Temptations*, properly speaking, are *Trials* of our virtue; are something proposed to us, either from *within* or *without*, which if resisted, will redound to our advantage and happiness; which if complied with, will work our misery and woe. As things inanimate, are incapable of action, therefore those temptations, which arise from worldly objects, are generally ascribed to the agency of that evil spirit, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and who makes these worldly things the instruments of his temptation: as well as those evil *lusts* and *propensities* which he finds in us, and which serve as fuel to his purposes.

No man, who believes the Gospel, can doubt the reality of spiritual agency, both good and bad. We must be worse than *Sadducees* to doubt or deny it.—We are assur'd, not only that there is a good and holy spirit, whose divine and gracious influences operate upon the human mind; but also that there is a wicked spirit, limited in power, and subordinate to the Almighty's controul, who is allowed to act, in a manner directly contrary to that of the good one. His business and delight it is, to seduce into sin, as it is the business and delight of the former to lead into all truth and goodness.—But to suppose with some, that either the one or the other so act upon the human mind, as absolutely to produce all its good or all its evil; is utterly to destroy the freedom

of human action, and wholly to incapacitate men, from receiving either rewards or punishments: for if all the good done in and by me, proceed from the irresistible operation of God's Holy Spirit; certainly I am wholly unconcern'd in the action, and of consequence can have no right to reward: As on the other hand, if all the evil I do, and all the crimes I commit, are to be laid to the wicked spirit's charge, and are to be consider'd as the unavoidable consequence of his temptations; certainly I am here acquitted, myself, from all blame, and can never with justice be punish'd for that, which I could not by any means avoid.—It was the more necessary to obviate this absurdity, as there are many pious and well-meaning persons, who are apt to ascribe all sin and transgression to the Devil, and to lay upon him the blame of all their iniquities, which is at once a false, and a dangerous position. *Falsè*; for nothing is more certain than that every man's sin lies at his own door: *dangerous*, because, if this could be true, no man need be concerned for his actions: since a just and good God will never punish any being, for that which he could not possibly avoid.

When therefore we speak of temptations, and the power of the Tempter, we must remember, that as all temptations arise either from within or without, either from our own lusts or worldly objects; so it is by means of  
these,



these only that the Tempter hath access to us: whose power is circumscribed: he can only suggest, he cannot force. And as we have sufficient power given us to resist him; not to him, but to ourselves must we attribute the guilt of our sins, when we comply with his temptations. We are the authors, tho' he may be an accessory; and though probably the violence of his temptations may in some measure extenuate our fault before God, yet can it never wholly excuse it; since before commission, there must have been our own consent.

These things premised, we may go on to offer relief to those, who are assaulted by the attacks of this evil spirit, through the medium of whatever inward or outward object. And nothing is more common than to hear Christians complain of the importunity of temptations, "and of the uneasiness they suffer, thro' the assaults of Satan."—Now to such complainants we might say, can this seem strange to you that you are tempted? when you remember, that the Son of God was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness tempted of the Devil! Suppose you that he who durst attack the captain of our salvation, God blessed for ever, will spare you, who are but frail flesh and blood! Why should that Saviour suffer himself to be tempted, (do you imagine) if not to succour

you in your temptations: *In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, (says the apostle) he is able to succour them, that are tempted.*

The keys of the bottomless pit are in his hands; he could have shut up that presumptuous spirit under chains of darkness, had he thought good: but he chose rather, for wise purposes, to permit him to tempt, that he might subdue and triumph over him.

Can you think, that He who now sits at the right hand of Majesty, commanding all the powers of heaven and earth and hell, could not easily prevent the assaults of that malignant spirit upon you? Can you think him less merciful than mighty? Would he die to save you; and will he let loose that roaring lion upon you to devour you? It is his pleasure, by his permission, and for your good, that you are tempted. Yet let no man, when he is tempted, say, *I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* God tempteth you not,—but know, that being his, you could not be tempted without his permission; suffering this temptation for his own glory and your advantage. That grace which he hath given you, he will have thus exercised, thus manifested. How had we known the admirable chastity of *Joseph*, if he had never endur'd so strong a temptation? How had we known *David's* Valour, if the *Philistines* had not sent forth their proud champion? How had we known

known the invincible piety of the three children, if there had not been a furnace to try them; or of *Daniel*, if there had not been fearful and hungry lions ready to devour him? Rest satisfied, and endure to the end: however long your trial, how importunate soever your temptations, trust in God, who knoweth your necessities, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: abide faithful, and your glory shall be according to your difficulties; the greater, in proportion to the greatness of the temptations which you have so happily overcome.

“ But alas, says the Christian, I fear I shall never overcome? For how frequently have I beaten off the wicked suggestions and temptations of the evil spirit, and yet still they return to me again, as if they meant to tire me with their continual sollicitations: as if I must yield to them, if not from their force, yet from their frequency?”

We should remember, that in our present warfare we have to do with *spiritual wickednesses*, as *St. Paul* terms them.—Whose nature is therefore as incapable of weariness, as their malice of satisfaction. But you have a spirit of your own, endowed with reason and the power of choice, and besides, God hath and will give you of his divine spirit to aid and strengthen: and therefore he expects that you should be also indefatigable in resistance.

“ Be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand.”—Look upon a much stronger champion than yourself, the blessed Apostle: you will find him in your own condition; the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him. Thrice he besought the Lord, that his temptation might be removed from him, but the Lord thought good to order it otherwise; he continued the temptation, but gave him a comfortable promise to countervail it. “ My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” It is not so much to be considered, how heavily we are burden’d, as how strongly we are upheld. While therefore the goodness of God sustains and supplies you with abundance of spiritual vigour and refreshment, answerable to the worst assaults and trials; what cause have you to complain of suffering? Very elevated and heroical is the advice of St. *James* to his fellow-sufferers, “ My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations or trials” - “ Beloved, says St. *Peter*, think it not strange, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ’s sufferings.”—The trial of our faith worketh patience; and the perfect work

work of patience is the crown of glory. The number of enemies adds to the praise of a victory. To overcome single temptations is commendable, but to subdue troops of temptations is glorious. "Be thou faithful unto death", continue still resolutely to fight the good fight,—“and I will give thee a crown of life,” saith the faithful promising God:

“But not frequency only, superiority of power in temptation, terrifies me, says the distress'd mind.—I am a weak and defenceless creature, my enemies are mighty—“we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Alas, who can stand against these children of *Anak*:—what mortal strength is sufficient to combat such unequal force?”

True, who is sufficient, if we were strong only in ourselves? But we are advised to be strong in the Lord, and to put on the whole armour of God, whose lowest angel is able to subdue a whole legion of these infernal spirits, though they be infinitely superior in power to men. Sad indeed would be our situation, if we were left utterly defenceless of God, and a prey to the teeth of these malicious spoilers. But our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The Lord is our strength and our shield; he is our rock and our sal-  
vation;

vation ; so that we shall not be moved. It is he that girdeth us with strength to the battle, and subdueth those that rise up against us.— In this confidence rest your soul: there cannot be so much difference betwixt you and the infernal powers, as there is betwixt those powers, and the Lord God Almighty: their force is finite, and limited by his omnipotence. He saith to them as he saith to the waves of the sea, “ Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.” You have a full proof of this in the miracle of the herd of swine, into which these haughty spirits could not enter without the immediate permission of him, who is Lord over them, and over all. How strong then soever they may seem to you, yet to him they are such absolute weakness, that they cannot so much as move, unallowed by him. Look not upon yourself then, as weak and unable to resist; look not upon them as strong and formidable; but look to that overruling hand of the Almighty, who directs even all *their* motions to his own holy purposes, and out of their wonted malice, and most pernicious efforts, raiseth glory to himself, and advantage to his servants.

“ It is a woful advantage indeed, says the mournful Christian, which I have made of temptations; for alas I have been shamefully foiled by them; and what by their subtlety, and what by their violence, have been carried  
into

into a grievous offence against my God, and with just confusion of face I acknowledge my guilt, in being thus miserably vanquished."

It is, in truth, a melancholy case, that you have given your deadly enemy this cause to triumph over you, and have thus provoked your heavenly Father. There is need, that you should be thoroughly humbled in heart, under the conscience of your sin, there is need that by a serious repentance you should reconcile yourself to God. After which, be not too much disheartened with the remembrance of your past failings, but by your future conduct and zeal, testify your sincerity, and advance in virtue. Thus your temptations themselves may be made, in some respects, advantageous. For are you not a gainer, if having been beaten down to your knees you have, in a just resentment of your fall, risen up, and fought so much the more valiantly? A wound receive doth but whet the edge of true fortitude. Many a one had never been victorious, if he had not first met with a slight repulse. Look where you will upon all the best servants of God, and mark if you can see any of them without his scars. Their courage, perhaps, had never been raised so high, if it had not been from the sense of some former discomfitures. As some well-spirited wrestler therefore, be not so much troubled with your fall, ('tis past, and cannot be recovered) as zealous to repay it with a  
more

more successful struggle. We know, says the blessed apostle, that all things *work together for good to them that love God*. Happy will it be, if your former offences and sins produce this effect. Happy will it be, if the great mercy, you experience in God's forgiveness of the past, works in you in a more fervent and active love for the future. Happy will it be, if the slips in your goings heretofore, cause you to walk more warily hereafter. Give glory to God while you take shame to yourself, and bless him, whose Goodness is so great, as even to cause offences to become benefits to that soul, which is sincerely desirous to atone for the past, and to approve itself before him for the future.

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S E C T. VI.

*Consolations for Persons under Temptation,  
continued: Proper Methods of resisting  
Temptations.*

“ **B**UT alas, you reply, my case is far worse than is conceived. I have been seduced more than once, by the power of temptation into the same sin: nay, even after I have made profession of my repentance, I have been transported into my former wickedness. Having washed off my sin, as I thought,



thought, with many tears, yet I have suffered my soul to be defiled with it again—what shall I do, to escape the condemnation due to so great guilt?”

We must not by any means flatter you: this condition is truly dangerous. Those diseases, which upon their *first* attacks, have received cures without any great peril of the patient, upon a return have threaten'd death. Look upon the servants of God, who have gone before you, they have carefully kept at a distance from the fire, wherewith they were first burnt. You do not find *Noah* a second time uncover'd in his tent; nor *Judah* climbing up again to *Tamar's* bed: you do not observe *Peter* again in the High Priests hall denying his master, or after *Paul's* reproof, walking again in dissimulation.---But while we set forth the fearful danger and hazard of this state, that we may be the more careful in our watchfulness; more vigilant to avoid it, if hitherto free from its condemnation: more serious in our remorse, if under its guilt: Yet we must not by any means give it up as desperate, or preclude such offenders from hope: especially, if you, who complain of it, upon examining your heart, find, that you are truly serious with God—that you have doubled your humiliation for the reduplication of your offence---that you have fought God so much the more incessantly with an unfeigned contrition of heart; that  
you

you find your soul brought to so much greater detestation of sin, as your acquaintance with it hath been more: that you have taken this occasion to apply with greater earnestness and fervour to the Redeemer, and to reinforce your vows of more careful and strict obedience. If you can lay your hand upon your heart, and, as in the presence of God, declare, that such are your resolutions, and such your desires; if you can say, "Lord thou knowest all things---I cannot pretend to deceive thee; thou knowest all things---thou knowest that my soul, in the bitterness of self-condemnation, earnestly desireth pardon and forgiveness."--- Thus can you say, then may you take comfort to yourself---This unpurposed repetition of your sin, will be no prejudice to your salvation, in case of your future obedience. It is one thing for a man to walk on willingly in a beaten path of sin; another to be turned aside as it were, out of the way of righteousness, by the violence of a temptation, which he soon recovers again by a sound repentance. The best cannot expect to be wholly free from sin: but let us remember it is said, "He that is born of God doth not *commit* sin,"--- *i. e.* doth not live in the constant wilful practice of it: he may be accidentally seduced into an *act*; he can never continue in the *habit* of sin: his heart is against that unto which his hand is drawn: and if in this inward strife, he be overpower'd, he doth not willingly yield, but

in a resumed courage and indignation, tramples on that which formerly supplanted him.

Did you give yourself over to a resolved course of sinning, and in such a state, should you very gravely and formally, now and then, upon a sting of conscience, point to your breast and say, “*Well, God forgive me!*” I should then have no comfort in store for you; for the Gospel would not afford me any supplies whence to draw---there could be no balm in *Gilead* for such a helpless state. But when your soul truly and earnestly deplores its past misdoings, there is mercy for such a one, and to such a one it may be said, “God hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.” That God who hath charged our weak charity, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good, justly scorneth, that we should think, his infinite and incomprehensible Goodness can be checked with our evil. It was not without a particular providence, that *Peter* came to our Saviour, with that question in his mouth: “Lord how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him; till seven times?” a question proposed, that it might have that gracious answer from the Son of God: “I say unto thee, not until seven times, but until seventy times seven!” And if this good and heavenly teacher would direct us, sinful men, to be thus indulgent to one another, in the case of our mutual offences, what limits can be  
for

set to his mercies towards us miserable offenders! And alas, if limits were set to his mercy, whither should we fly, who so grievously and continually offend him in thought, word and deed! But happy for us, we are assured, (and certainly it must be an information refreshing to our souls as the cooling rain to the thirsty ground) we are assured that if we are but penitent, he cannot but be gracious. He desireth not the death of a sinner: but readily, for his dear Son's sake, admits that sinner to pardon, when the bended knee, the uplifted hand, the tearful eye, the broken and contrite heart, express their sorrow by the trembling voice; and in humble supplication entreat, "O Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, O Lord hearken and do: defer not for thine own sake, oh my God! I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge my iniquities, wherefore I humbly beseech thee, forgive me; O Lord forgive me, and destroy me not."

Hence then we learn, that under all temptations we may derive comfort to ourselves, from the recollection, that the Son of God also himself, the captain of our salvation, hath suffer'd being tempted, and therefore as conscious of the evil, is more able and ready to succour and assist us. Though our enemies are many, and our trials great, yet our help is greater, and our God invincible; who knoweth all our difficulties; without whose permission the

the enemy cannot even attack us; and who hath assured all those who trust him, that he will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that they may be able to bear it. Nay, and we learn, that through the goodness of this God, even our temptations may be made subservient to our glory, and our fall minister to our felicity, by rendering us more active, cautious and humble: while we are assured to our comfort, that even relapses into sin, though they are fearful and dangerous in the highest degree, shall not exclude us from salvation, if they do not prevent the exercise of sincere and undisssembled repentance.

But while we consider how exceeding perilous such relapses are, how disingenuous towards God, how dishonourable to our profession, how painful to our own consciences---let it be a lesson to us, diligently to watch against all temptations, and to follow the advice of *St. Peter*, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist steadfast in the faith*”---and whom if we resist, we are assured, “*that he will flee from us.*”

But then the question is, how we are to resist him? He is an invisible spirit, and operates invisibly: in what manner are we to guard against his subtle attacks? Recollect  
what

what was said at the beginning of the last section, and you will be satisfied as to this matter. We observed that our own inward *lusts*, and the outward allurements of the world, are the grand instruments of Satan in his temptations. He hath no access to our minds but by these. The “best, nay the only way then to disarm temptations, is by mortifying our lusts, and subduing our vicious inclinations. When this is done (which by the grace of God may be done) the Devil hath lost his greatest advantage over us. ’Tis the conspiracy of our lusts within, with the temptations offer’d from without, that betrays us into their power. The true reason, why men fall into sin, is not because they are tempted, but because there is something within them, which inclines and disposes them to comply with the temptation, and to yield to it. It is said, when Satan came to our Saviour to tempt him, that he found *nothing* in him, nothing of his in him; no guilt which could give him power over him, no corruption which might take part with his temptation; and therefore his temptations had no force upon him.” The more we mortify our lusts, and subdue our evil affections, the less will the tempter find in us for his temptations to work upon. Every spark is dangerous when it falls upon combustible matter; but though sparks fly ever so thick, there is no danger, so long as there is nothing about to catch fire. If

we do not thus mortify our evil affections, let us not complain of the violence of temptations: the more we indulge in habits of sin, the greater power we give the evil spirit over us, who leadeth those captive at his will, who voluntarily submit themselves to his influence, by giving place to the dominion of those *lusts* which establish the kingdom of the prince of darkness.

But let us be careful, that neither in this case, nor any other we charge God foolishly, and absurdly cast the blame of our sins upon the irresistible temptations of the wicked spirit. To be tempted, tempted even to the vilest actions, is no fault of ours: this may be involuntary: but to comply or resist, is certainly in our own power, and our compliance only can render us criminal. But this compliance will certainly render us criminal: since the Devil could have no power over us, if we were not enticed and led aside by our own lusts, which supply him with the means of access to us; and which, if we used our reason, and applied for God's assistance, we might certainly conquer if we would, for greater is he that is for us, than he that is against us. It can never be supposed, that God hath enjoined any thing upon us, as our bounden duty, and upon the peril of our souls, which it is impossible for us to perform. This is the greatest absurdity to suppose: we may certainly then mortify our evil lusts and affections,

and if we do this, we need not fear the assaults of the tempter.

Yet as our Enemy is so unwearied in his solicitations, and so insatiable in his malice to God and the souls of men, deceitful as are our own hearts, and as our lusts and evil inclinations are so prevalent, insomuch that it is difficult to withstand the force of temptations; great, very great need there is, that we should be continually on the watch against the attacks and insinuations of these spiritual wickednesses; that we should keep a strict and regular guard over ourselves, lest we give the enemy an advantage, and our souls an overthrow.

Be sober, be vigilant---sober, sedate, serious: keep your minds in such an even frame, that you may never be surpris'd thro' levity and dissipation: be *vigilant*, watchful against the insidious endeavours of your restless adversary---watchful in the regular and uniform discharge of those holy duties, which will procure for you the continued watchfulness of him, who keepeth *Israel* and neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. If you neglect this *sobriety* and *vigilance*, if like the careless centinel, you either fly from, or sleep upon, duty; ---you must not marvel if your enemy take the advantage, and enter in and spoil your city; you must not marvel if you fall a prey to his devouring rage, of which surely they are little sensible, who live continually exposed

to



to his snares, and who by lives of repeated and continual folly and vice, invite him to rule over them, and to hold uncontroled dominion in their breasts. Far different are the proceedings of the sincere christian---prepared for, and expectant of, temptations; he neither dreads them with an unmanly fear, nor despises them with an unwise confidence. Assured, that God is able with the temptation to make a way for him to escape, he relies on the power of the Almighty, and trusts in him with an unshaken courage; yet convinced, that even the prayers of faith, and the humility of dependance are not sufficient, without his own endeavours, which God requires from us in every instance; he resolutely combats those inward lusts and vicious propensities, which all men derive from the original corruption of their nature; and to this end arms himself with every piece of spiritual armour, provided for him against the attacks of his infernal foe.—Thus he stands in a resolved preparation, and conscious of his enemy's power, subtlety and malice, relaxes not his guard, but continues steadfast on duty. The word of God is the two-edged sword which he ever weilds successfully: it was that with which the great captain of our salvation so effectually conquer'd the tempter upon his first and grand assault: the christian soldier therefore endeavours to be expert in the use of this important weapon. Truth, invariable truth, is the girdle of his loins: righteousness, universal

righteousness, the splendid breast-plate which secures his upright heart: Faith is the invincible shield which he receives, and on which he extinguishes all the fiery darts of his enemy: The glorious hope of eternal salvation is an helmet for his head: and his feet are shod with that gospel of peace, which will always guide him in the right path, and preserve him from the ways of error.—Thus provided, and “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance,” he shall at length be more than conqueror, through him that loved us; and laying aside at once this divine panoply, and all the occasions for its use, freed for ever from his enemies, for ever freed from the conflict, he shall enter those regions where temptations are never known, for there is no tempter;—where temptations *can* never be known, for there are no corruptions—and where he shall receive the reward of his fidelity, even a crown of glory, from his gracious hands, who suffer’d himself, being tempted. “that he might be a merciful high-priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and no less willing than able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him.”

## C H A P. III.

CONSOLATIONS *for the Afflicted in* BODY.

## S E C T. I.

*Consolations in* Sickness.

**A**fflicted in mind, distress'd in estate, languishing with disease, the melancholy *Job* thus poured forth his complaints to Heaven: *Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balance together! for now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea, therefore my words are swallowed up; (therefore I want words to express my grief;—pain and anguish and disease, with every aggravating circumstance, oppress me!) For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me!—To feel and to complain, with the humility of resignation, are compatible with the greatest degree of patience. Indeed, under the rod of severe chastisement, human nature cannot but feel; and when the arrows of the Almighty, the pangs of deepest sorrow drink up the spirit, how can the soul restrain from the pathetic cries of lamentation and intreaty!*

And who can promise themselves any security from these evils! Doom'd to death, there are a thousand gloomy and painful avenues which lead us to it. Doom'd to trial and to suffering, there are a thousand fearful disorders which stand in horrid readiness to put our patience and resignation on the proof! Many disorders, of which the seeds are sown in our original frame and constitution, and which therefore the strictest temperance and the utmost vigilance cannot prevent: and disorders of a nature still more dreadful, which are the fatal consequences of our intemperance and excess, our debauchery and vice! we cannot but tremble for our danger, and commiserate the state of mortality, when we contemplate the long and melancholy muster-roll of diseases;—when we view pale and wan consumption, burning fever, half-dead palsy, full-gorg'd apoplexy, panting asthma, joint-torturing gout, wild convulsion, swollen dropsy, moping melancholy; and all the other racking and heart-sick ministers of death, too numerous to count, and too horrid even to mention! Yet how many of our fellow-creatures, even at this moment, are toiling beneath the heavy hand of one or other of these, deeply groaning on the bed of anguish, and suffering all the extremities of sickness and of pain; while death triumphant stalketh over them that dart with which he soon shall strike, but still delays to strike the fatal stroke,

stroke; though so oft invoked by them with earnest vows, as their chief good in this distress, as their final hope in this mortal conflict?

And, alas! who of us can tell how soon we may cease to enjoy an exemption from these messengers of death; how soon we may cease to bear our brows aloft in all the vivacity of health; while we languish, stretched on the bed of sickness, and toss our restless heads on the pillow of disquietude and disease! As this event is probable, it is well to be prepared; for it is our great happiness that the Christian religion supplies us with such powerful cordials, such exquisite comforts, as are capable of rendering the bed of sickness not only instructive but advantageous; as are capable of disarming pain of its severity, and introducing the softest peace and composure amidst the anguish of afflicting disease.—As therefore this is a matter of common concern, I will proceed, after having offered all proper consolation to the afflicted in MIND, to propose such arguments of comfort as are suitable to the afflicted in BODY, and such as cannot fail to have an happy effect, if duly applied

1. The first consideration then which in sickness ought to awaken our patience and submission, is the *recollection* of the hand that smiteth us. *Affliction*, we are assured, *cometh not out of the dust*; and could we hear the

voice, as well as feel the stroke of our affliction, it would say, *Am I come up, without the Lord, to try thee? the Lord has said to me, Go up against this man and afflict him.* Did we thus remember whose hand is upon us, we could not forbear, in resignation, to kiss the rod that correcteth us; for this evil is commissioned by no other than him who is our gracious Father and our protecting God! who created us, of his own free goodness and mercy, who redeemed us by his own most pure and precious blood! And can we then conceive that *he* means us evil in this correction, that *he* intends our harm, and punishes merely to pain! far from us be the thought!—You are a father (suppose) and feel the tender yearnings of parental affection! oh tell me then, did you ever take the rod into your hand out of a pleasure which you took in tormenting the flesh which is derived from your own bowels! was it any ease or satisfaction to you to make your child smart or bleed! nay, did you not suffer yourself more than you inflicted! yet you saw good reason not to spare; nay, you were convinced that you had not loved your child so well, if you had been wanting in this kindly severity!—And if we, who are evil, know how to give loving and beneficial correction to our children, how much more, how much better shall our Father who is in heaven know how to give us correction, as loving and beneficial! wherefore we may say rejoicingly,

joicingly, amidst the smart, *I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled!*

Thus, from the consideration of the hand from whence all trouble comes, we may well derive the best consolation: “It is the Lord, “it is the God of my life, it is the Father “who made, who preserved, who redeemed “me:—I receive it therefore with cheerfulness,—let him do what seemeth him good.”

2. A consideration of the author doth almost necessarily involve that of the end for which troubles are sent. A good father, we are assured, cannot correct us for his pleasure, but our profit. This consideration therefore should inspire us with patience. On the bed of languishing we may ask ourselves, why is this sickness sent unto me? and we may easily answer, that the only ends which the good God can propose are, either the trial of our faith and patience, or the correction of our vices and offences. And if we attain either of these ends by means of our sickness, we certainly are indebted to God, and have much cause to rejoice. If we attain them not, we ourselves are to blame, and we have frustrated the kind purposes of our heavenly Father towards us. Our *Church* in her excellent and comfortable exhortation to the sick, takes care to inform them, with all propriety, of these two first grounds of consolation, the *author* and the *end* of sickness. “Dearly beloved,

“ loved, know this, that Almighty God is the  
 “ Lord of life and death, and of all things  
 “ to them pertaining, as youth, strength,  
 “ health, age, weakness and sickness. Where-  
 “ fore whatsoever your sickness is, know you  
 “ certainly that it is God’s visitation. And  
 “ for what cause soever this sickness is sent  
 “ unto you, whether it be *1<sup>st</sup>*, to try your  
 “ patience for the example of others, and  
 “ that your faith may be found in the day  
 “ of the Lord laudable, glorious and honou-  
 “ rable to the increase of your endless felici-  
 “ ty:—or else it be sent unto you *2<sup>dly</sup>*, to  
 “ correct and amend in you whatsoever doth  
 “ offend the eyes of your heavenly Father;—  
 “ know you certainly, that if you truly re-  
 “ pent you of your sins, and bear your sick-  
 “ ness patiently, trusting in God’s mercy for  
 “ his dear Son Jesus Christ’s sake, and ren-  
 “ der up to him humble thanks for his  
 “ fatherly visitation, submitting yourself  
 “ wholly to his will:—it shall turn out to  
 “ your profit, and help you forward in the  
 “ right way to life everlasting.”

3. A third argument of comfort on the  
 sick bed may be drawn from the greater suf-  
 ferings of much more excellent and exempla-  
 ry servants of God than ourselves, as well as  
 from the resolution even of heathens.—Hear  
 how *Job*, that perfect pattern of patience,  
 pours forth his complaint in the words pro-  
 duced at the beginning of this section, *Oh*  
*that,*



*that, &c.* Hear the man after God's own heart uttering his mournful cries, *Oh, my God, I cry unto thee in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night-season and am not silent!* Hear the plaintive *Jeremiah* sighing forth, *I am the man who have seen affliction by the rod of his wrath:—surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.* Why should I mention the prophets and apostles, the martyrs and confessors, those holy favourites of heaven, expiring amidst sufferings which are shocking to relate, and breathing out their thankful souls in the midst of tortures, in comparison whereof the severest pains of disease are light and inconsiderable!—I do not dwell upon this topic, as it was handled at large heretofore, when we offered consolation to the afflicted in general; but certainly the review of so many and such exemplary sufferers, men so chosen and beloved of God, yet tried so severely in the furnace of affliction; but, especially, the review of his bright example, *Jesus* the prince of sufferers, must enable you to support your trial, and to bear your sickness with chearful resignation!

4. But if we may learn resignation from the shining pattern of the Christian sufferers before us, certainly the heroic patience and resolution of many in the heathen world, who had neither our motives to incline, nor our hopes to encourage must influence us, who profess the religion of Christ, into submission  
and

and patience. Who are we us'd to esteem more contemptible than *Epicurus*, that great advocate for voluptuousness and joy! yet, even he, when in the dying hour he lay in acute anguish from other diseases, and extremely tormented, with the stone in particular, and gasping, as it were, for life; even *he* could then write, out of the strength of his resolution, to his best-lov'd friend, assure him of his perfect cheerfulness, and style the day of such severe pain, "blessed and pleasing to him!" What shall we say of that famous *Mutius Scævola*, who, in a glorious revenge, like our *Cranmer*, voluntarily burn'd off his own right hand, no less envied than pitied, even by his enemies! or of *Regulus*, so well known in story, who rather than forfeit his faith, and violate his honour, willingly gave himself up to the cruel hands and tortures of merciless barbarians! "Why should you think it strange, (says *Seneca*) that some men should be well satisfied to be burnt, to be wounded, to be racked or otherwise tortured to death! Consider, that frugality is a *pain* to the riotous; labour is a punishment to the idle; continence is a misery to the lustful; study is a torture to the slothful; yet all these things are not in their own nature difficult. They may be conquered; why then may not the fear of all pain whatever:—doubtless it may; but we are faint and false-hearted!"—And shall these heathens attain to such an height of magnanimity,

nimity, from the mere strength of their own manly resolutions, while we Christians droop and sink under far less sufferings, though we profess to have the superlative advantages of divine faith to uphold and cheer us! They never heard of any gracious engagements from a merciful, from a redeeming God, to stand by and to comfort them; they never had heard these cheering and consolatory messages from heaven, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me.—Come unto me, all ye that travel and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees; Say to them, that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence: he will come and save you."—They had not the faith of a *Job* to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth!* they had not the eyes of a *Stephen* to pierce into the heavens, and to see the beloved Saviour of mankind standing on the right hand of glory; they had not the knowledge of a Father of mercies to sooth their sorrows; of a Redeemer to deliver and reward their patient endurance; of a Comforter to strengthen and refresh them; they had not great and precious promises to sustain them here, and an eternal weight of glory to recompence them at last! A serious reflection on these things, on the patience they shewed under advantages so inferior

ferior to ours, must teach us patience in the day of trial.

5. And here I might properly urge the example of our Saviour as the strongest argument of consolation on the bed of sickness and sufferings; but I chuse to offer this as the last and most prevailing consideration of all.—While I go on to observe, that from the vicissitudes of health we may and ought to derive comfort in sickness. You are now sick, but were you not before a long time healthful? you surely can have no cause to repine who have had, for the most part, more *days* of health than *hours* of sickness. Had the Divine Wisdom thought fit to mitigate your many days pains with one hour's ease, it had been well worthy your thanks; but now that he hath beforehand requited your few painful hours with years of perfect health, how ungrateful would it be to murmur at the condition! all earthly things are in perpetual vicissitude; if you did not expect this universal change, observed throughout nature, to affect yourself, in how gross a mistake have you been! as well may day be without a succession of night, and life without death, as a mortal perishing frame without the warnings and admonitions of disease! and how much better are these warnings, are the loudest warnings of severest sickness, than a final change to misery unutterable, without such solemn cautions. It was a word of deepest  
woe,

woe, which fell from the lips of *Abraham*, when he said, *Son, remember that thou in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented!* Oh, happy stripes wherewith we are chastened of the Lord, so that we may not be condemned with the world! happy loss of health which introduces to perfect soundness and safety of soul! welcome pains which teach us ourselves; welcome evils which lead us to our God; thrice welcome fevers, and every other calamitous sickness, which preserve us from burnings unquenchable, and miseries which can never be cured!

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## S E C T. II.

*Consolations on a Sick-bed.*

6. **A**NOTHER consideration from whence we may derive comfort on the sick-bed is, the incomparable preference of such a state to full health and forgetfulness of God. There is no man that can hesitate to prefer virtue and soundness of soul to mere health of body; who would not rather chuse to be *good*, than *healthful*! But why not both together, you may ask?—doubtless they are not inconsistent; but, in many cases, they are unhappily, though very improperly, separated: and therefore when that great God, who looketh  
 much

much further into us than our own fight can pierce, when he sees that our health is running riot, and that if our body be not, our soul will infallibly be sick: surely we can have no cause to complain, nay, certainly, we shall have great cause to be thankful, if he afflict and take down our inferior and corruptible part a little, that he may deliver our nobler and incorruptible part from mortal danger. Nature, it is true, delights in it; but a secure and uninterrupted health frequently proves the most dangerous indisposition of the soul. How unspeakable the advantage, if it can be remedied, by a few bodily pangs! Look upon the man, who, in the height of his spirits, and the heat of his blood, eagerly pursues his lustful and sensual delights, as thinking of no heaven but the indulgence of his depraved appetites;—and then look upon the sick-bed, where lies the Christian afflicted, it is true, with grievous pains, and unable to close his restless eyes; yet fixed in dependance upon God, and humbly resigned to his will;—and say, which of the two you think to be in the most happy and eligible condition! If we be not shrunk into nothing but mere sense, if we have not cast off all thoughts of another world, we cannot but pity his misery, whose health affords him all the means of gratifying his unlawful passions; we cannot but congratulate the happiness of the humble and faithful sufferer, convinced of the  
advantage

advantage of suffering, as being that which now preserves from the guilt, and hereafter shall preserve from the wages of sin.

We complain of sickness, and yet there have been many who have bestowed tears on *their* too much health, apprehending, on that account, God's neglect of them, and, consequently, his disfavour; for as he chastiseth those whom he loves, so he threatens that *affliction shall rise up no more* to awaken those who have proved incorrigible, and are therefore left by him to the darkness and disorders of their own unhappy minds!

It may, perhaps, be carrying the matter too far to bewail the continuance of health, and to lament the want of sickness, since health is certainly a distinguished blessing from God, and, as such, to be used and esteemed. We are bound continually to pray for it if we have it not, to thank and to praise him for it when vouchsafed to us. And there seems little reason to suppose that any one can be an object of the divine displeasure, that any one can want God's favour, who hath so quick a sense of it, and is so desirous of it and salvation, as even to wish for adversity, for sickness and sorrows to qualify and refine him.

However, in the time of sickness, and when God is pleased to try us severely therewith, we certainly ought to believe, that the continuance of health, in our own particular case, would have been to the prejudice of our souls,

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that

that this sickness, as being God's visitation, is sent for our good; and that humble sickness is better than full and thankless health.— Nay, we may go still further, and cheer ourselves with the many and important advantages which sickness affords for our improvement in grace, and every Christian temper. The celebrated Mr. *Paschal* was, from his youth, tried in the school of sickness and affliction, and no man, perhaps, ever arose to a greater height of piety. During his sickness he used constantly to say to his friends, who commiserated his sufferings, and beheld his pains with tender concern; “ Do not be concerned, my friends, I *know* the dangers of health, and the advantages of sickness. Do not lament for my sufferings; sickness is, as it were, the natural element of a Christian, because a man becomes, by that means, what he always ought to be, suffering in the midst of evils and adversity, and destitute of all the good things of prosperity; deprived of all that administers pleasure and gratification to the senses; exempt from all the passions, which are apt to accompany one, through the road of life; void of ambition, free from avarice, and placing his fixed attention constantly upon death. And is it not thus that Christians ought to pass their lives? Is it not a singular happiness, when a man finds himself, forced by necessity, into that state of life which he

“ would



“ would otherwise be obliged, in conscience,  
 “ to chuse of his own accord? When he finds  
 “ that he has nothing more to do, than  
 “ humbly and peaceably to submit!—For  
 “ this reason I have only to request of you,  
 “ my friends, that you would prefer your  
 “ prayers to Almighty God,—not for my  
 “ health, not for my recovery, but—for his  
 “ grace and good Spirit to support and sustain  
 “ me with all proper resignation.\*”

In this manner did he endure all his sufferings, and thus did he improve his sickness, upon the benefits of which he so finely expatiates, as almost to make one desirous of the state! however, these reflections cannot fail to afford us strong consolations, when God shall think fit to lay his hand upon us, and to stretch our faint and feeble limbs along the bed of languishing and disease!

For then, alas, far different will be our conceptions and ideas of things, than they too often are found in the full flow of uninterrupted health! then these consolations will come with new efficacy, and it will be cheering to us when we recollect, that God is the *author*—and our good the *end* of all sickness, and all divine chastisement; that the holiest men, singular favourites of Heaven, have not been exempt from the stroke of affliction.—That heathens themselves have sup-

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ported

\* See *Paschal's Thoughts*; and his *Life*, in the *Christian's Magazine*, vol. i. p. 253.

ported it with resolution and intrepidity, that the vicissitudes of health should reconcile us to the patient endurance of sickness; that the incomparable preference, and all the advantages of submissive sickness above those of thankless, thoughtless health, should cause us to bow our heads with submissive cheerfulness, while we say with Job, *Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?*

Other Arguments of Consolation for the Sick-bed will be offered in the next Section: let me only observe, that nothing will be found more effectual to assuage the torments of disease, to soften the pain, and refresh the languishment of sickness; nothing will be found more effectual to introduce the happy calm of resignation, to smooth the restless passions into patience and peace; nay, nothing will be found more effectual to remove all the importunate anxieties and the natural fears of death, than the sweet, the blissful retrospect of a faithful life, led in obedience to the laws, and under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. Thus to live is to prepare in the best manner possible, not only for the day of sickness, but for every day of gloominess and distress.—We may then rest under an happy confidence, that the God, whom we have humbly sought and served, will not forsake us in our greatest need; nay, we may be assured, that he will be more near to us, the more we want his help,  
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and that our strength shall indubitably be in proportion to our necessities.

But what if we are brought to the bed of sickness by diseases, the fatal consequences of our own deviations, the issue of our vice, intemperance and irregularity?—What can sooth us in such sickness, what can alleviate the severity of our tortures, when, in such cases, the arrows of pain rankle in our bodies, when our joints tremble, and there is none to assuage our anguish!—When the review of past life adds to the terrors of the disease, and we can behold nothing in ourselves but guilt and shame on one hand, pain and weakness and sorrow on the other!

Such a situation, though, alas, too common, is deplorable enough to draw tears from the eyes of a barbarian\*! Oh that men were wise, that they would consider these things, and look to the tremendous probability of such sad effects of their vices! But most marvellous it is to find, that in many such cases, when God hath been pleased to withhold his hand, as it were, from punishment, and to restore the sufferer to health, again to try the sincerity of his vows; that the sufferer hath forgotten all his vows, all his anguish, and all his former resolutions; and, with aggravated guilt, returned to the evils whose consequences he so lately and so severely felt and deplor'd!

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\* See *Sophoclis Oedipus Tyrans*. l. 1318.

This is the extremity of folly; on the other hand, when God arrests the sinner in his course, and summons him to reflection by the hand of fatherly chastisement, it is the wisdom, which becomes a rational creature, to receive the correction with submission; to improve it by serious self-examination; to perfect it by sincere repentance, humble faith, and well-grounded resolutions of amendment. And wherever sickness or afflictions, of whatever kind, produce this happy effect, we may say, with the strictest truth, that they are fatherly and loving visitations from God; and, whatever our past conduct may have been, however unhappy, however distant from the Christian purity, we are assured, that, through the blood of Christ, our sins will be totally blotted out: and we shall have the justest occasion to bless the hour, when the hand of sorrow and disease stooped us in our career of vice, and laid us on the bed of languishing and pain; when the loss of health procured the gain of heaven; when our kind Father, unwilling that we should perish, and be forever lost, smote us in love, and chastened us in mercy; shewed us ourselves, and our danger; shewed us at once our disease and our cure:—Sin our disease; the blood of Christ our never-failing cure!

## S E C T. III.

*Consolations in Sicknefs.*

**M**ANY arguments have been offered in the former fections to teach us fubmiffion, and give us comfort on the bed of ficknefs. They were derived efppecially from a confideration of the author of all chaftifement, God our Father; and of the end, our good; from the example of the beft and moft exemplary men in all ages, who have not been exempt from the feverity of trial;—from the heroic patience and refignation which many in the heathen world have difplayed;—from the viciffitude of health which we have enjoyed;—and from the fuperlative preference of fubmiffive ficknefs to full and thanklefs health.

7. I now go on to obferve, as a farther argument of confolation, and as a powerful motive to fubmiffion, that our ficknefses and fufferings are far lefs than our deferts; and therefore we fhould rather reflect upon what we deserve to feel, than upon what we do feel! *Wherefore doth a living man complain or murmur, fays the prophet, a man for the punifhment of his fins?* We are told affuredly, that the wages of fin, of every fin, is death; a double death, temporal and eternal, of body and foul. Every thing therefore fhort of this, is mercy to finners. For there is not the leaft of our many thoufand tranfgreffions

but hath merited the wrath of a just God, and, consequently, more torments than we are able to undergo. Can we then complain when light afflictions,—for all temporal afflictions are *light*, compared with eternal;—when these befall us to correct us for our future welfare, and to preserve us from everlasting suffering? Where we owe a thousand talents, we are ordered to take our bill and sit down and write fifty: can we fail to magnify the clemency of so favourable a creditor! how infinite is the goodness of our indulgent Father, who chasteneth us with so gentle a correction!

Nay, and let the nice and murmuring child of affliction, tossing dissatisfied on the bed of sickness, let him reflect, if he cannot bear these stripes, these light pains, how will he be able to endure those that are infinitely more afflictive? For what are these to the unutterable miseries reserved for the impatient and repining sinner? Miseries and pains exquisite, and without mitigation, pains eternal without intermission, miseries which can neither be avoided nor endured! Let us think upon these, amidst the evils of present sickness, and we shall lay ourselves low under the hand of a good God, thankful for that present tolerable misery, which will prevent our future and intolerable.—Besides, let us recollect that the wisdom of God hath graciously thought fit, in the general, so to temper our afflictions, that if they are sharp they are not long;

long; if they are long they are not intensely sharp; that thus our strength might not be exceeded either way by our trials.—Be content then, either your languishment shall be made easy, or your severe pain shall soon be over. Extreme and everlasting are terrible words reserved only for the enemies of God in the future world. That is truly long which hath no end; that is truly painful which is not capable of any relaxation; that is truly insupportable which is refreshed by no hope. What a short moment is it that we can suffer here? short, may let us say, *nothing*, in respect of that eternity which we must all either *hope* for, or *fear*. There is no medium. The sense of this will make the sufferings of our present sicknesses and trials, light and easy to be borne.

8. Another motive for chearful submission in sickness may be drawn from the advantages which arise from the exercise of this virtue. Without pain and trouble there could be no such virtue; and God never gives virtues without an intent to exercise them. To what purpose were our Christian valour if we had no enemies to encounter? God is pleased to lay his hand upon *you*, and to call *you* forth to trial, who have hitherto been secure and unmolested. Where is your fortitude if you shrink back and refuse the combat? you who profess, who early professed, to fight under his banner, who is the great Conqueror of death and hell! Is  
this

this the way to that happy victory which shall be rewarded with a crown of glory!—If you faint, oh Christian, in the day of your adversity, your strength is but small; adversity is the season wherein the graces of Christianity flourish most; and *patience* is that virtue which can only then be manifested, and which will not fail of God's particular favour and support;—*the trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope,* which shall not be ashamed: for after we have patiently endured like *Abraham*, like him we shall obtain the promise.

9. Let me observe too, that the common condition of mortality unavoidably subject to changes and chances, to sickness and sorrows, should reconcile us to these whenever we meet with them! Sickness should never be looked upon as an unexpected guest. If we consider our frame, made up of so many nice and delicate parts, we shall rather wonder that we enjoy so much health, than that we endure so much sickness.—And while we meet disease with this just and reconciling thought, we shall find the bed of sickness made comfortable by the recollection, that God is at no time more near to us, or more tenderly indulgent. *The whole, saith our Saviour, need not a physician, but they that are sick.* The physician, ordained for the hour of necessity, cometh not but where there is need; where need is, he will not fail to come. Our need



is motive enough to him who himself, of his own free will, took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses: while we are his patients he will not be kept from us.—*The Lord, says David, will strengthen thee upon the bed of languishing: he will make all thy bed in thy sickness.* Lo, the sincere Christian is told, that the heavenly Comforter will not only visit, but attend him; he will assuage the severity of his pains, make his pillow easy, and his bed soft.

Indeed we may be allowed, from our own disposition, to collect something of God's gracious indulgence towards his suffering children. You are a parent of children, and, perhaps, though they are all truly dear to you, yet you see, or think you see, some reason to regard one more than another; but if any of them is seized with a dangerous distemper, how much more careful and anxious are you about this than the rest; how your bowels yearn for him, and all the tenderness of your affection is called into act? With what silent anxiety do you watch by his bed, attentive of every breath, jealous of every whisper that might disturb his slumber, answering every one of his groans with so many sighs; and, in short, making so much of him for the time, that even your greatest darling and favourite seems neglected in comparison of this more necessary charge.—How much more then shall the Father of mercies, and the God of all comforts, be compassionately intent upon  
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on the sufferings of his dear children, according to the proportion of their afflictions! Labour only to secure his favour, to love him and serve him as an obedient child, and in the day of sickness, in the day of every distress, he will be present with peculiar consolation; *for as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him.*

10. Another argument of comfort in sickness may and ought to be derived from a comparative view of the evils of others; from the freedom of our minds, the attendance of our friends, and the several advantages which we enjoy in alleviation of our miseries.

Our pains may be great and our bodies feeble, but it is a blessing for which we cannot be too thankful, when our minds are free and our senses perfect. The soul cannot be chain'd down by the fetters of the body; but, amidst the confinement of it, can soar into the heaven of heavens, and, on the wings of meditation, prayer and love, dedicate itself to the God of all events. If the better part of us is thus employed, no pains of the inferior part can make us miserable. That better part, by God's grace, ere long shall be in bliss, while this earthy tabernacle shall moulder in dust, and be forgotten in the grave. We should therefore, before this separation, improve all the powers of the soul to our present advantage; we should let that, with the eye  
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of faith, steadily behold the face of God in glory, whilst our bodily eyes, with tender concern, behold the weeping friends at our bed-side, who may mourn for and pity us, but who, alas, cannot help us in that last solemn conflict!

But be it remembered, that the kind tendance and gentle sympathy of such friends, as it is a real comfort in itself, so it is a reason for great thankfulness in us! How many toss on the bed of sickness without one friendly hand to assist, one friendly eye to drop the compassionate tear!—How many feel the miseries of sickness aggravated exceedingly by the total neglect, or unkind treatment of those from whom they might have expected the lenient balm of consolation!—how many breathe out their departing lives without one loving hand to do the last sad office, and to close their mournful eyes!

Again, the benefits of all necessary medical help, of all proper care, support and nourishment should endue us on the sick-bed, not only with patience, but with great thankfulness to God who so bountifully provideth for us in our sickness, while many of our fellow-creatures languish not only under the miseries of disease, but of severe poverty; have neither the benefits of medicinal help, nor the support of proper nourishment, nor the watchfulness of reasonable care! but left to their woes, to solitude and sorrow, they pine in  
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lone distress, and heave the broken-hearted sigh, forsaken by all, (ah what is human life!) forsaken and deprived of every earthly comfort!

Yet, rich in consolation, as is our divine religion: These, even these, thus poor, neglected and forsaken have arguments for comfort, superior to all that have yet been offered, which indeed equally concern the high and the low, but which, if wanting to the high, will render every other source of consolation dry and insufficient, and which, if found with the poor, will well compensate for the want of every other. These are the *example* of Christ, and the future recompence awaiting the patient sufferer, after his example. Of these in the next section.

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#### S E C T. IV.

##### *Further Consolations for the Sick-bed.*

**W**E are next to shew what a source of comfort arises to the Christian from the example of Christ, and the happy prospect of a future Reward.

11. It is enough for the disciple, that he be as his Master; our Master was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; grief not his own, sorrows not the consequence of his own misdoings; he suffered for us, and for us became

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came acquainted with all the extremity of human tribulation. Whatever we endure, we may justly say with the penitent malefactor, *We receive the due reward of our deeds*, but this Man, though dying on a cross, amidst shame, reviling and agony, deserted, forsaken, forsaken even by his God, this *Man hath done nothing amiss*. As it was for our salvation that he came into the world, so was it to expiate our sins, and atone for our guilt that he vouchsafed to lead a life of such suffering, and to die a death of such anguish. And therefore in whatever distresses we are plunged, as we have his all-sufficient sacrifice to atone for our sins, so we have his instructive example to direct and support us. Are we poor? the Son of man had not where to lay his head; are we in pains and sorrows? behold and see if ever agony was like his in the garden and on the cross; if ever sorrow was like his sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger? Are we neglected on our bed of sickness and of death by our nearest friends; are we reviled by our enemies? lo, Christ hath tasted of that bitter cup for us also; all his disciples forsook him and fled; they who passed by cast their unhallowed and impious scoffs at the patient and blessed sufferer. In short, a reflection upon the sorrows which our divine Master endured, upon the motive of his enduring them, namely, his love to men; upon the manner in which

he endured them, humble, patient and resigned; upon the glorious end of them, his triumphant resurrection and exaltation; and upon the divine and comfortable promises which are given to those who suffer with him, that with him they may be glorified; these cannot fail to inspire us at once with cheerfulness, resignation and comfort, not only on the sick-bed, but under every trial. "For there should be no greater comfort to Christian persons, (to use the words of our Church,) than to be made like unto Christ by suffering patiently adversities, troubles and sicknesses; for he himself went not up to joy, but first he suffered pain; he entered not into his glory before he was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ, and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death, and dwell with him in life everlasting."—In this view, we may well say with *St. Paul*, *I glory in tribulations*, as by them I am enabled to take up my cross and to follow the steps of my blessed Master; for without a cross there is no crown.

12. But for those who follow their Master, for those who patiently endure, the reception of that crown, the eternal crown of glory shall more than overbalance all their miseries, as the joyful and pleasing expectation of it will serve abundantly to alleviate the present weight of them, and to render them easy to  
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be borne.—This is a source of the amplest comfort to the sick and oppressed soul, and the last which I shall offer.

*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: he seems to labour for words to express the greatness of the future felicity, Καθ' υπερβολην εις υπερβολην αιωνιον βαρους δοξης, a far, &c. While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.—And again; I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rejoice, says Peter, inasmuch as ye are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*

I have heretofore strongly enforced the present argument of consolation, and therefore have the less need to insist upon it; only let us remember, that our afflictions here are well and emphatically called *light* by the Apostle, in comparison of the sorrows which await the unchastised and unawakened sinner. Happy afflictions they, which occasion a light temporal distress, while they ransom from eternal anguish. But St. Paul calls them not only light, but also *momentary*; of a moment's continuance; and such they are, truly speaking, when the short span of this life is compared

pared to eternity! Eternity, ever awful word! how should it arouse us into serious thinking! for can we, shall we live only for the shadows of this world, when, behold, everlasting glory may be obtained by our proper use of this short hour, and, by our abuse of it, everlasting misery! Must not this reflection teach us patience and resignation on the bed of sickness? Besides, our afflictions are not only *light* and *momentary*, when compared to the great things of eternity, but they are not *even worthy to be compared with the glory* which the suffering Christian shall receive; they are not worthy even to be mentioned. Let us then, on the bed of sickness, not contemplate our wretched estate,—not consider our pains and our sufferings,—but let us elevate, through the present gloom, the eye of faith to that blessed that important hour, when the imprisoned soul shall burst the bars of its confinement; and enter triumphant into the realms of perfect bliss; shall receive the crown of glory unfading, from the hands of its applauding Saviour; be welcomed by thousands and ten thousands of immortal and blessed spirits; be admitted to his presence, where is the fulness of joy; be for ever released from the allurements of sin, the oppressions of sorrow, the fears of death.—Farewel then, for ever farewel the tearful eye and the bleeding heart! farewel the tender anxious dread of separation! farewel the melancholy scenes  
of



of parting and the beloved-friend's last weeping adieu! Immortality, glory, peace, heaven, and eternity are for ever secured to us!

These considerations must be sufficient to fill the Christian on the bed of sickness with perfect resignation, nay with more than resignation, with chearful comfort, holy hope, and grateful joy; nor can we too seriously reflect upon them, since our state is so fearfully precarious, since so many diseases and casualties throng the paths of life, and minister to the all-devouring tyrant; and since none of us can tell how soon we may stand in need of these consolations to soften the rigours of sickness, and to sooth our souls on the bed of languishing. Then it will be advantageous for us to recollect, over and above what was before suggested, that our afflictions being far less than our deserts, we ought to receive them submissively; that patience can only be exercised under afflictions, and that the exercise of it is highly beneficial to our souls; that sickness is ever to be expected, as being the common and natural lot of mortals; that God is never nearer to us, or hath a greater regard for us, than when we are under affliction; that a comparative view of our suffering with that of others, and a consideration of the particular blessings we enjoy, ought to teach us submission and thankfulness; while, above all, the example of Christ, and the future recompence of glory, should

comfort us under every trial, and make us under every trial grateful, thankful, and happy.

Permit me just to observe, in conclusion, that the religion of Christ is peculiarly the religion of the afflicted. One great proof of its excellence is drawn from the vastly superior comfort which it affords, above any other system ever proposed to mankind; and this certainly must greatly recommend it to us. For this life is a state of trial and trouble; no one is exempt from it; man is born to trouble, we are told by the sacred writer, as invariably and surely, as the sparks fly upwards. The religion therefore which affords us the strongest and most effectual support under these, must be the most welcome to us, and should be cultivated with the most watchful care; for, let us remember, that the consolations of Christianity can never be offered, with any propriety, nor ever received with any inward satisfaction, where the heart is conscious of its depravity, and the life is stain'd with impure and unholy practices. To enjoy the comforts, we must lead the lives of Christians. It is in vain to cry *Lord, Lord*, and expect the smiles of our divine Master, while we have continually so acted as to deserve only his frowns. Would we meet sickness with a cheerful hope, would we meet death with a well-grounded confidence, let us now prepare.—Perform the duties, and your's are the promises

promises of Christ. But if you depend upon the latter, in neglect of the former, who shall comfort you on the bed of sickness? your conscience will be your worst accuser; and when conscience accuses, who can console!

Happy they who can say with *St. Paul* on the bed of sickness, *This is our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* Therefore I am not afraid or ashamed of suffering, for *I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*

“But what if our lives have been evil; what if our past conduct testifies against us?” why then the Christian religion, in this respect, again peculiarly commends itself to you: for that religion alone opens to you the never-failing fountains of divine comfort, shews you assuredly (what no other religion can do) the grounds of reconciliation with God; and, to your unspeakable comfort, declares, that through the merits of the Saviour, pardon and grace is freely granted to the earnest and sincere cry of undissembled repentance and living faith.

Bring but these to God, and let your future life testify your sincerity, and then adopted into his family, and reconciled to his favour, when you call upon him in trouble he

will hear you; he will strengthen you upon the bed of languishing; he will make all your bed in your sickness; and though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; he correcteth us not for his pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness, and consequently of his happiness, through Christ our Lord!

C H A P.

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CHAP. IV.

CONSOLATIONS for the Afflicted in  
ESTATE.

SECT. I.

*Consolations under the Loss of Friends, drawn  
from Considerations respecting God.*

**W**HAT a scene of trial and trouble is the present! from what various quarters do the arrows of affliction fly to the human heart! doubts and cares and fears oppress our minds! diseases and pain torment our bodies!—*friends* die,—our dearest friends die,—and a sad breach is thus made in our happiness!—This is a source of deep distress; it calls for all our pity and for all our aid; and, blessed be God, such is our divine religion, that it presents comfort to every care, and hath balm to bestow on every wound! As therefore we have endeavoured to suggest the proper arguments of comfort to the distressed in MIND and BODY, let us now proceed to offer all possible relief to such as are distressed in ESTATE or Condition; and first to those who mourn the loss of beloved and deceased FRIENDS.

The great Author of our being hath, for wise and good ends, so constituted our nature,

that the social affections operate with peculiar force upon our minds, and sway us almost irresistibly. It cannot therefore be supposed, when the just and proper objects of such afflictions are taken from us, that grief is criminal, that sorrow is wholly forbidden us, Impossibles can never be criminal, can never be forbidden; and it is impossible to withhold the gushing tear, to stop the deep and melancholy sigh, to be void of tender and affectionate feeling, when the friend, dear as our own soul, when the beloved parent, when the valuable husband or wife, when the child of our bosom, and of our hopes, are taken, for ever taken from our embraces, and lodged in the cold bowels of the comfortless grave.—The dispositions of men are also so various, that the same affliction will produce very different effects on different minds; that which shall melt down one person will hardly warm another. Where there is a predominance of the softer passions, every bowel shall move within them, and like the sensitive plant, they shrink in, and are affected with the smallest touch. Some natures are even *painfully* tender; to such therefore we must allow a larger liberty in sorrow, as they have a more feeling sense of grief.—The occasions of sorrow too may justify a greater degree of it; some losses are so truly distressful, some cases so extremely pitiable, that one cannot deny to the sufferer some indulgence in grief.

grief. Who can blame the widow,—nay, who can fail to weep with her,—when she laments, in all the bitterness of anguish, that fatal stroke which separates from her and her little orphans, the husband of her heart, the father, the friend, the support!

Grief therefore, tender grief, is by no means forbidden or blameable; thus far we plead in its behalf. St. Paul, when he advises us not to sorrow, as others who have no hope, plainly allows us to sorrow. He does not say, I would have you not sorrow at all,—but not as those, &c. Christianity would regulate, not totally suppress our grief. But though grace doth not destroy, it refines nature; though it doth not extinguish the affections and passions, yet it rectifies and moderates them. To be altogether unconcerned is unnatural, for the most part is impossible; to be too much concerned is unchristian: they are both hurtful extremes to any soil, to have no water at all, or to have it overflow and drown the whole country\*.

While then we plead for moderate, we would offer arguments against immoderate sorrow; and sorrow may then truly be said to be *immoderate*, when it makes us peevish and passionate, irreconcilable to, and out of humour with all our other blessings, because God hath been pleased to take away one;—  
when

\* See Grosvenor's Holy Mourner, from which we have taken very liberally, as we know no book more worthy on the subject.

when it unsuits us for the duties of religion, and the business of life. "He is a miserable man indeed, says one\*, who is afflicted and cannot or will not pray;"—when we are so much taken up with our own as to attend to the sorrows of no-body else;—when we are regardless of God's design in our affliction, of the lessons we should learn from his correcting stroke;—when we refuse to be comforted, and exceed both in time and measure;—when our spirits are soured, and we murmur and entertain hard thoughts of God;—and lastly, it is immoderate when we suffer it to prey upon our *health*. Sometimes, indeed, sorrow kills entirely, and as effectually, as if a man were shot through the heart; sometimes it operates more gradually, but then it does its business as surely as a slow and eating poison. For the food seldom nourishes which is mingled with tears; the air refresheth not, the faculties of nature perform not their functions amidst immoderate and indulged grief;—and the end is a broken heart! *By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken*, says the wise man; and we sometimes read in the bills of mortality, this affecting article,—*Died of grief*;—an article which would be much larger and oftner inserted, if all who died of grief were to be distinguished: for very many are the diseases which are the natural issue of immoderate sorrow! How offensive in the sight of God

\* Old Mr. Dold's sayings.



God such sorrow must be, we shall clearly discern from the motives to submission and comfort, which I now proceed to offer, and which may be derived from considerations that either respect, 1. God; 2. Our deceased friends; 3. Our own selves; or 4. Others about us.

1. In the first place then immoderate grief for the loss of friends is highly unreasonable, if we consider who it is *that taketh away*. It was sufficient to stop the torrent of old *El*'s grief, amidst the loss of his children and the total extinction of his house, when he recollected the hand inflicting the heavy blow, *It is the Lord*, said the resigned old man, *let him do what seemeth him good*.

Consider only, that God is our great and uncontrollable Sovereign, who hath an absolute right and propriety in us and all that we have; and the thought must teach submission. Again, consider his superlative Majesty and unspeakable excellence, and it must strike us dumb with the profoundest humility! *Shall not his excellency make thee afraid*, says the sacred writer? his excellency who dwells in light unapproachable, before whom angels veil their faces.—Wilt thou lift up thy bold front against him, and charge that glory with shame, that brightness with a spot, that wisdom with folly, and that justice of his with any iniquity? If such poor children of the dust, as we, would contemplate the unutterable greatness and glory of the Lord of life and death, we should

should receive, with greater submission, any chastening dispensations from him.

Consider again his infinite perfections; he is infinitely wise and cannot err; infinitely powerful and cannot be resisted; infinitely holy and cannot behold iniquity without abhorrence; infinitely good and can do no evil; and he is infallible truth itself, so that he cannot falsify his word.—If it were possible to take the management of matters out of his hands into our own, it would be the best way for us to replace them again in the hands of God. It is he to whose will all the course of nature besides uniformly complies;—why then should not we? And when we read that Christ himself said, *I am come to do thy will, O God*; and, *Father, not as I will but as thou wilt*; who are we that we should pretend to speak any other language?

After the perfections of God consider the *relations* in which he stands to us; he made the human will! Shall he not give laws to his own creature? Did he form this hand to strike at himself? this breath, this tongue, to speak against him;—did he make us and freely give us *all* things, that we should blaspheme him, when he is pleased to withdraw some of them! oh, strange impiety!—but, as dependant creatures, do we not live, and move, and have our being in him? as we are expectant creatures, is it the way to obtain our will of him, to deny him the homage and submission

submission of our own wills?—as we are sinful creatures, have we not guilt enough upon us already? shall we swell the account and increase our misery?—As we are accountable creatures, he is our Judge; as we are recoverable creatures, he is our Saviour; and can we be displeas'd with any of his methods towards making all these ideas concur to our salvation? To be redeemed from the tyranny of our own wills and irregular appetites, is no small part of the redemption by Jesus Christ. Did he give himself up to death for us, and shall we think it too much to give up our wills to him?—Shall the redeemed dispute the orders of the Redeemer? shall servants dispute the will of their master; or subjects say to such a king, *What dost thou?*—We are his friends only upon the term of doing whatsoever he commands us;—and if, under the relation of children, we go to him as our Father who is in heaven, certainly we ought, as dutiful children, ever to add, *Father, thy will be done.*

To the consideration of the *relations* which God bears to us, we may add, that whether *we submit* or not, his will must and shall be done; and therefore it is far better and wiser for us to have the blessing and comfort of a dutiful submission, than to murmur under a fretful and unprofitable compulsion to it. Nay, and in every loss, we may and ought to reflect how much further God might have gone

gone with us, depriving us of all our comforts as well as of part of them; he might have given up our souls to terror, our bodies to disease, our affairs to confusion. It behoves us therefore to be thankful, that he hath only afflicted thus far, and that with our friends he hath not taken away all things beside. *David*, in his pathetic reply on the death of his child, shews us the absurdity of unreasonable grief, and the folly of not submitting to the will of God which is irreversibile; *While the child was yet alive, said he, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live?* the most humble submission allows the use of all proper means, and of the most fervent application to God in prayer; *But, he goes on, now that he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*

Moreover, a well-grounded persuasion of God's exact and particular providence is a strong consolation amidst the loss of our friends. If there were no providence we should want one of the best antidotes against the fears of what is to come, and the sorrows for what is past; for, (as Bishop *Patrick* observes,) all the care would then lie upon ourselves, and that would be far too much for us; but when a man thinks of Infinite Wisdom and Power governing all things he cannot fail to be submissive; for God disposes of all things, not only

only as absolute Lord, but as a loving Father, that we might be sensible no less of his goodness than of his power. It is distrust of God, to be too much troubled about what is to come; it is impatience against God to fret at what is present; and it is anger at him to be too much concerned for what is past.—Such a frame of spirit finds fault with his wisdom, blames his goodness, depresses his power, reprehends his faithfulness; and therefore is highly sinful and speedily to be amended.

The wise and great ends he is advancing to his own glory and our good, is another motive to submission. God hath as much right to use us to the purposes of his own glory, whether perceived by us or not, as we have to use any instrument in our house, or to employ any of our servants without acquainting them with our purposes. Had not *Abraham, Joseph, Job,* and others been used by God much otherwise than according to their natural will, we had lost the benefit of the finest instances of submission, and they the blessing of the fullest reward. “I see God will have *all* my heart, and he shall have it,” was a fine reflection made by a lady, when news was brought of two children drowned, whom she tenderly loved—O Lord, we are the clay and thou the potter; behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are we in thine!

But be it remembered, that whatsoever you lose you cannot be miserable, while  
you

you have this God to be your God and portion; the God who made the creatures we are so fond of, who gave them all the loveliness and perfections we so much admire, and hath, without doubt, in himself all that which he gave and infinitely more. How does it sound to say, "I am undone, for I have nothing but God left!" Surely God can fill up the room of any departed creature, though the whole world cannot fill up the room of a departed God! to lose a creature and find a God, has been an happy exchange to some, whose losses have brought them to know God and themselves; God who will eternally be more to us than he can ever take from us!

Let us also observe, that as submission to the will of an All-wise Father is the most reasonable duty of dependant creatures, so is it the most acceptable sacrifice to God, and the highest duty of Christianity; and one whose deficiency can be atoned by no religious services whatever: though we offer ten thousand sacrifices, or give the fruit of our body for the sin of our soul; all this would be vain without resignation to the Divine Will: all the practices of religion without it, are mere formality, hypocrisy and pretence. "Do you see how that person employs himself in the offices of devotion? can any one be more assiduous in hearing and reading, in prayer and sacraments?—you shall soon perceive of  
how

how little worth all this external service is; lo! God puts forth his hand and takes away the delight of his eyes with a stroke; and presently the God, which he seemed to adore with so much resignation, can hardly have a good word or a good thought, can hardly be allowed to be wise and good and just, or any thing but a severe and hard master. He not only mourns, but he pines and consumes, and rages against God; God and his heaven are cyphers now in comparison of the creature, to which yet that God hath done no harm, but only removed for purposes in which this man himself will rejoice, when he comes to know them.

Vainly indeed do you call God Most High, and quickly something else appears higher in your esteem; your husband, your child, your wife, your friend;—you call him Most Glorious, and yet glory more in something else; you compliment him with the title of Faithful and True, but while he sees that you will not trust him in the way of your duty, that you will not take his word in a promise for a work of piety to God, or charity to man, he esteems himself flattered. And be sure, that all pretences to serve and honour him are vain and fruitless, can neither be acceptable to him nor profitable to you, if your heart deny him the tribute of humble resignation; if you retain the pride of self-will, and are not ready cheerfully to receive what-

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ever

ever he shall think fit to ordain. The contrary behaviour impugns his wisdom, goodness, power and truth.

From these then and the like considerations, which respect God, we may learn the great duty of submission, as well as derive arguments of comfort, when he is pleased to take away any of our friends from us; *he*, who is the absolute Lord and Sovereign of all his creatures, whose greatness and majesty are uncontrollable, whose perfections, his truth, wisdom, goodness are infinite, and who, from the relations which he bears to us, necessarily requires perfect submission to his will; which must and shall be done, whether we submit to it or not. The reflection,—that his particular providence ruleth and directeth all events; that all events are designed by him to promote our good and his glory; that no events, however melancholy, can deprive us of him and his mercies, if we be not wanting in our duty;—must give us consolation under the loss of our dearest friends; while a remembrance of the great importance of submission and resignation must render every sincere soul desirous of attaining this temper, which is no less happy in itself, than it is pleasing to God; no less conducive to our present tranquillity, than to our future glory!



## S E C T. II.

*Consolations under the Loss of Friends, drawn from Considerations respecting those Friends themselves.*

FROM these considerations respecting God, we proceed to such as regard our departed friends themselves. God who gave them to us, hath been pleased to re-demand his own gift, and to take them away from us! why should we not say, *Blessed be the name of the Lord!* blessed be his name for vouchsafing them to us so long. He had a property in them before we had any; they were his before they were our's; now they are his eternally.—And, oh! say, would you have your beloved friends immortal here, only to please you? would you have them live, though weary of life, and stay below, though longing to be gone? would you have them in misery, though fit for happiness? would you have them kept amidst the troubles of life, the pains of sickness, the infirmities of age; or, at the very best, in the vain insipid repetition of the same round of things, only to prevent a vacancy in your amusements and delights? *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* oh, surely, thou lovest thyself more than thy friend, or thou would rejoice that he is delivered from all the evils of mortality!

Besides, we know the irreverfible condition of humanity. A parting time must come; why

then not this? If the time of parting with our friends were left to our choice, it would greatly increase our confusion! We know that we enjoy our friends only upon a very frail and uncertain tenure; why then should we not endeavour to reconcile ourselves to that necessary separation, which, indeed, is not the total loss, is not the utter extinction of our friends. Blessed be God, Christ hath brought life and immortality to light; and we are assured, that our dear friends do not cease from existing, they only exist in a different state and manner; a different and a far more happy;—for, though absent from us, they are present with the Lord; entered into joy unspeakable and full of glory! why then any immoderate grief? it can neither be profitable to us nor to them; it may do us much hurt, it can do them no good; it may weaken our bodies and prejudice our health; it may sadden our spirits, deprive us of the comforts, and indispose us for the duties of life!—and what advantage can there be to the departed from so costly a sacrifice to their memory! do they need, can they be pleased with our tears, who have for ever taken leave of weeping themselves, and have such infinite cause for joy! could your cries call back the departed spirit, and awaken the clay-cold body into life; could you water the plant with tears till it revived, there might be some excuse for the abundance of your sorrow; but there are no *Elijahs* now who may stretch

stretch themselves upon the breathless corpse and bring back its departed soul. *Wherefore should we weep? can we bring them back again, --we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us.*

And, can it be, would you have them return? do you lament their felicity? are you grieved for their happiness? would you wish to bring them back again? would you wish to have your dear child, your affectionate parent, your faithful comfort, your valuable relation, now safely landed in the haven of eternal rest, would you wish to have them again placed on the uncertain shore of this life, and subjected to all its temptations and difficulties? would you have them walk over the precipice once more, fight the dangerous battle over again, again run the arduous race, be tempted, sin, and suffer again? would you have them indeed return for your gratification, from that holy place to this place of sin, from joy to trouble, from rest and peace to new vexations? their sentiments are different, their affections raised and ennobled, and, as well as they loved us, they would not come back to us for all the universe; and yet, as well as we loved them, we cannot, for our unreasonable grief, wish them joy of their new elevation and dignity!—Oh! let us struggle against these unworthy apprehensions, and congratulate ourselves, that we have already friends, friends dear as our own souls, friends for whom we could well have been content to die, that we

have such already in the kingdom of God, and waiting to welcome us to that blessed and better country!

There is the joy, there is the grand source of consolation under the loss of friends,—we shall meet again! They are delivered from their trial, while we are left behind a few weary years longer; and behold, the time of our departure also cometh, when we shall follow our friends, and be for ever with them and with the Lord! For ever! comfortable truth, never more to part; never more to hang over the dying-bed, to catch the last mournful farewell, to hear the sad agonizing, heart-rending groan! We shall meet, meet with an inexpressible reciprocation of endearing love and multiplied joy, to find ourselves all thus together, after our parting sorrows,—together, not in the world of trial, trouble and sin,—but in a place where all things and persons, that are any ways offensive, shall be totally removed! No falseness or rancour, no partiality or mistake, no prejudice or infirmity, no malice or envy, no passion or pride shall ever discompose us there, nor ought be found to molest or hinder the heavenly pleasure circulating through every happy heart, and dwelling upon every joyful face and thankful tongue!

Let us elevate our souls to that blissful meeting, let us reflect upon its unspeakable comforts, and we shall silence all our complaints,

plaints, and have only one anxious concern, how to improve our own souls and to secure the Redeemer's favour, that we may not fail to meet,—to meet, and enjoy for ever, those whose loss we so sensibly feel, and so tenderly regret.—And let us observe, that this is a most awakening motive to the cultivation of sincere and undissembled friendship, to activity in all its kind and endearing offices, to the valuing our beloved and Christian minds; namely, to look beyond the narrow limits of this world, and the short satisfactions of the present transitory scene, to that future, that glorious meeting, the exquisite raptures of which the good heart may faintly conceive, but can never fully express. If we have any love for our friends, any tender desire to meet them again, this is one of the strongest arguments possible to incite us to a diligence in all the duties of our holy religion; for what anguish can be conceived so great as to meet those friends again, only to be condemned by the Judge which hath blest them, and to be hurried, for ever hurried from them into misery eternal!—Surely, if we consider this, we shall be anxious to serve and honour our God, and so will the joy of our future meeting be certain and inexpressibly great.

Look not then, oh afflicted mourner, to the breathless body and the devouring grave; hang not over the melancholy contemplation, nor esteem thy valued friend as for ever lost

to thee; a day is coming, thrice happy glorious day,—oh speed it, God of infinite love and goodness; make us fit, and hasten that joyful day!—a day is coming when thou shalt be set free from all the anguish of distressful sorrow; when thy eyes, to weep no more, shall be closed on this world, and thy soul shall ascend to the Paradise of God! There shall the enraptured parents receive again their much-lov'd child; there shall the child, with transport, meet again those parents in joy, over whose graves, with filial duty, he drop the affectionate tears; there shall the disconsolate widow cease her complaints, and her orphans, orphans no more, shall tell the sad tale of their distress to the husband, the father; distress even pleasing to recollect, now that happiness is its result, and heaven its end!—There shall the soft sympathies of endearing friendship be renewed; the affectionate sisters shall congratulate each other, and faithful friends again shall mingle converse, interests, amities, and walk high in bliss with God himself; while all shall join in one triumphant acknowledgment of his wise and fatherly goodness, who from afflictions deduceth good, who bringeth men to glory, through much tribulation, and purifieth them for his kingdom in the blood of the suffering Lamb!

## S E C T. III.

*Consolations under the Loss of Friends, drawn from considerations respecting Ourselves.*

**M**OTIVES for submission and comfort, under the loss of our friends, may be derived from considerations which respect either God, our departed Friends, Ourselves, or Others about us. We enlarged upon the arguments drawn from the two former topics, God and our departed Friends; it remains that we consider such as regard *Ourselves* and *Others*.

In order to moderate grief we should remember, with respect to *Ourselves*, that the loss of friends is no strange or uncommon accident; that still we have many blessings remaining; that self-love is too much concerned, very often, in our grief; that God means our good, and that all affliction is profitable, if duly improved.

We should remember, 1. That no strange or uncommon thing hath happened to us; nothing but what is usual amongst men, nothing but what we well know is the universal condition of our nature. It is no more strange that a man should die than that he should be born: art thou better than thy fathers who are dead and gone? what makest thou thyself!

We come into a family and see one sitting  
lonely,

lonely, in all the silence of distress; another is overwhelmed with tears and sighs; another is gone up to his closet like *David* to weep and cry out, *Oh, Absalom, my son, my son!*—And what is the cause of all this? why one that was born to die is dead! was it the first child, the first husband, the first friend that ever died? had you a patent from heaven against the common lot? would you have had God made this person immortal to please you? *He teareth himself in his anger*, saith *Job*;—shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and shall the rock be removed out of its place? Reconcile thyself to the ordinary lot of thy being; no strange thing, but what thou shouldst every day expect, hath happened to thee!

2. But consider again, that in this friend all your blessings are not gone; how many mercies and comforts are continued to you, and how many troubles kept off which might have befallen you. You have lost some children; it might have been all. You have lost all; it might have been your husband or wife at the same time. You have lost husband or wife; it might have been also estate and all the means of subsistence: or suppose that gone too, you have liberty and health and peace and friends; or suppose they are also gone, yet, yet, hold up your heart in this extreme distress, you are yet within reach of heaven, you yet have God to apply to, which is a greater good than any you have lost, or  
 than



than all put together. Pardon of sin and peace with God may still be yours; and if in the shipwreck of every earthly comfort you find these and embrace them, you will have no need to lament the severity of your affliction!

There are indeed some cases of distress which are particularly mournful, but when they have peculiar comforts. Thus the *widow*, for instance, left with many little helpless orphans weeping around her, and wanting support; deprived not only of the husband and the father, but the means of living and the supplies of bread; to such an hapless woman, thus severely exercised, what comfort can you offer, what blessings has she left?—She has the greatest of blessings; the immediate and especial care of *providence*; of that God who, throughout his gracious word, hath shown himself tenderly concerned for the interests of the *widow* and the *orphan*, whose cause he hath promised not only to plead, but to avenge, and whose cause he hath recommended to his people by the strongest arguments! *Leave thy father's less children to me saith he, and I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me\**. Let them but trust in God, and lead such holy and exemplary lives as may give them reasonable grounds for such a trust, and they will experience the protecting mercy of his fatherly hand! their children,  
duly

\* See my Sermon on the Widow's Sons,—Miracles, vol. i. p. 217. and the Reflections on Death, c. 4. p. 51.

duly and carefully instructed by them, shall become pleasing comforts to their age, and happy soothers of all their sorrows. Friends, unexpected friends shall arise,--providential friends; *for pure religion and undefiled is to visit, to visit with comfort and assistance the fatherless and widows in their affliction*; and blessed of the Lord is the man who judgeth their cause, and helpeth them in their distress.

3. Another motive to moderate our grief for the loss of friends should be a serious inspection into the cause of that grief; and in such a case we shall often find, that self-love is at the bottom of our sorrow. We have lost a pleasure and an advantage; we are mourning over the living rather than the dead; if one, every way the same, would make us easy, the sorrow is not for the departed, but for ourselves who survive. *Cicero*, speaking of the death of a friend, saith, "No evil hath happened to *him*; whatever it be, it concerns only *myself*; and to be severely afflicted at one's own misfortunes is a proof not of love to our friends but ourselves." As self-love therefore predominates so much, we ought to moderate our passion, and turn the stream of our grief another way, lamenting that our hearts are so selfish, and that we can with so much difficulty resign a present satisfaction, and make a sacrifice of our wills to God.

4. We are bound, moreover, to consider the end and design of affliction, and in consequence

quence to improve it properly. But I insist not upon this, nor upon the due desert of our offences, which certainly merit punishment severer than we usually meet with; we, who out of so many possible miseries, have generally so few fall to our lot, when we are born to all by descent, subject to all by nature, and deserving of all by sin. But these topics I have enlarged upon in the former sections.

Let me only observe, that as the great end of Christianity is to draw our affections from this world, and to fix them upon a better; so nothing is more calculated to produce that end, than the loss of our dearest friends, and their removal to that world, where we hope shortly to meet them. What is life without the blessings of sincere friendship? What do we live for but our friends? The only ties that hold us here, and make us willing to stay, are the tender, the affectionate ties of endearing relationship. But when the relations, the friends for whom only we lived, are no longer allowed to continue with us; when those, who were dearer to us than ourselves, are for ever taken from our mortal sight; surely we shall leave this pilgrim's state with less regret; surely it will make death more welcome, to have sent before those beloved ones, with whom we have the blessed hope of meeting in a better world, eternally to enjoy each other, and never more to be pain'd with the anguish of parting.—So cut

off

off the fibres, and loosen the root, and the tree fast fixed in the earth but now, easily falls, and sheds its leafy honours on the ground.

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## S E C T. IV.

*Consolations under the Loss of Friends, drawn from Considerations respecting Others.*

**T**O these considerations which respect Ourselves, let us next add those, which may be drawn from a regard to Others, to the world about us. I observed in the Consolations which were offered to those on the *Sick-bed*, that a comparative view of ourselves with others, and of our many superior advantages, was a strong motive to submission and thankfulness; the same may be applied in the present case. Compare your loss and your circumstances with that of others, and you will soon see many more mournful and miserable than yourself. There are a thousand persons with whom you would not change conditions, nor be willing to lay down your own, upon an allowance to take up their burden. By what law is it that you must only gaze at those above you, and take no notice of those below; that you must look on him only who is carried on mens shoulders, and never think of the poor men that carry him!—

Look

Look down, look down, oh child of sorrow, look to the many sufferers beneath thee, and thou wilt learn, at once, acquiescence and content. For, be assured, that as the most certain method to feed an envious and discontented spirit, is to look up to those above you, so the surest method to learn submission, under the influence of God's grace, is to cast your eyes on those in the inferior stations of life.

Consider, moreover, that while you mourn the loss of one friend, you owe the tribute of duty and regard to others who *survive*; for their sakes, you should learn to moderate your grief and compose your mind. Because you have lost a child will you forget that you have a husband? because you have lost a husband will you forget you have children? Let not a concern for the dead totally obliterate a regard for the living.

Again, you owe a duty as a Christian to your fellow-Christians. What will they think of your sincerity, when they see you overwhelmed with sorrow for the loss of a friend who is removed to God; for an affliction which your religion hath led you constantly to expect, and hath assured you is one mark of your adoption into the family of God, and a proof of his parental goodness: *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.* Nay, and perhaps God is pleased to propose you as an ex-  
ample;

ample; this loss may be sent not for the trying of your own faith solely, but for the example of others. And will you defeat the purpose of God, and be so far wanting in humble resignation, that others will have no advantage from your example; nay, that your profession will be reproached through you, who, upon trial, do not exercise that virtue, which is the first in Christianity, and without which, (as we have before observed) all pretences to religion are vain, vain without an humble and filial submission of our will to God.

Let us also consider, as in a former case, that if we are wholly wanting in this virtue under afflictions and losses, we are not only unworthy the name of his disciples, who through suffering entered into glory, but we fall short of many heathens. A *Spartan* woman had five sons in the army upon the day of battle; when a soldier came running from the camp to bring tidings to the city, she was waiting at the gate; and enquiring *what news*, “Thy five sons are slain,” said the messenger. “I did not enquire after them, replied she; how goes it in the field of battle?” “We have gained the victory, said he, *Sparta* is safe.” “Then, said she, let us be thankful to the gods for our deliverance and our country’s freedom.” *Zeno*, the philosopher, lost all he had in a shipwreck; “he protested it was the best voyage he ever made

made in his life, because it proved the occasion of his betaking himself to the study of virtue and wisdom." *Seneca* says, "I enjoy my friends and relations, as one who is to lose them; and I lose them, as one who have them still in possession." And to the gods he speaks thus: "I only want to know your will; as soon as I know what that is, I am always of the same mind. I don't say you have *taken from me*, but that you *have accepted from my hands* what I was ready to offer!"

Surely these noble sentiments should inspire us with a generous emulation to excel those who were so inferior to us, in every advantage. And while we profess ourselves disciples of a Master, who hath set us such an example of suffering and of patience, and who hath given us so many and great promises, we shall cheerfully acquiesce in all his gracious disposals, receive good as well as evil with a thankful resigned heart; that it may be said of us, as the Christians used to say of old, "We do not talk, but we live great things."

Such are the arguments for submission and comfort under the loss of friends, which may be derived from a consideration of *Ourselves* and *Others*. Arguments which are so excellently applied by Sir *William Temple*, in his famous letter to the Countess of *Essex*, on her immoderate grief occasioned by the loss of her only daughter, that, instead of recapitulating what hath been advanced, I will subjoin in

the next section that letter, which well deserves the most careful perusal.

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## S E C T. V.

*Sir WILLIAM TEMPLE'S Letter of Consolation to Lady ESSEX, on the Loss of her only Daughter.*

“ I Know no duty in religion more generally agreed on, nor more justly required by God Almighty, than a perfect submission to his will in all things; nor do I think any disposition of mind can either please him more, or become us better, than that of being satisfied with all he gives, and contented with all he takes away. None, I am sure, can be of more honour to God, nor of more ease to ourselves; for if we consider him as our Maker, we cannot contend with him; if as our Father, we ought not to distrust him: so that we may be confident whatever he does is intended for our good, and whatever happens, that we interpret otherwise, yet we can get nothing by repining, nor save any thing by resisting.

But if it were fit for us to reason with God Almighty, and your Ladyship's loss be acknowledged



knowledged as great as it could have been to any one alive, yet, I doubt, you would have but ill grace to complain at the rate you have done, or rather as you do; for the first motions or passions, how violent soever, may be pardoned; and it is only the course of them which makes them inexcusable. In this world, Madam, there is nothing perfectly good, and whatever is called so, is but either comparatively with other things of its kind, or else with the evil that is mingled in its composition; so he is a good man that is better than men commonly are, or in whom the good qualities are more than the bad: so, in the course of life, his condition is esteemed good which is better than that of most other men, or wherein the good circumstances are more than the ill. By this measure, I doubt, Madam, your complaints ought to be turned into acknowledgments, and your friends would have cause to rejoice rather than condole with you; for the goods or blessings of life are usually esteemed to be birth, health, beauty, friends, children, honour, riches. Now when your Ladyship has fairly considered how God Almighty has dealt with you in what he has given you of all these, you may be left to judge yourself how you have dealt with him in your complaints for what he has taken away. But if you look about you, and consider other lives as well as your own, and what your lot is in comparison with those

that have been drawn in the circle of your knowledge; if you think how few are born with honour, how many die without name or children, how little beauty we see, how few friends we hear of, how many diseases, and how much poverty there is in the world, you will fall down upon your knees, and, instead of repining at one affliction, will admire so many blessings as you have received at the hand of God.

To put your Ladyship in mind of what you are, and the advantages you have in all these points, would look like a design to flatter you; but this I may say, That we will pity you as much as you please, if you tell us who they are that you think, upon all circumstances, you have reason to envy. Now if I had a master that gave me all I could ask, but thought fit to take one thing from me again, either because I used it ill, or gave myself so much over to it, as to neglect what I owed either to him or the rest of the world, or perhaps because he would shew his power, and put me in mind from whom I held all the rest, would you think I had much reason to complain of hard usage, and *never to remember* any more what was left me, *never to forget* what was *taken* away.

It is true you have lost a child, and therein all that could be lost in a child of that age; but you have kept one child, and are likely to do so long: you have the assurance of another,

ther, and the hopes of many more. You have kept a husband great in employment and in fortune, and, which is more, in the esteem of good men. You have kept your beauty and your health, unless you have destroyed them yourself, or discouraged them to stay with you by using them ill. You have friends that are as kind to you as you can wish or as you can give them leave to be by their fears of losing you, and being thereby so much the unhappier, the kinder they are to you. But you have honour and esteem from all that know you; or, if ever it fails in any degree, it is only upon that point of your seeming to be fallen out with God and the whole world, and neither to care for yourself, or any thing else, after what you have lost.

You will say, perhaps, *That* one thing was all to you, and your fondness of it made you indifferent to every thing else; but this, I doubt, will be so far from justifying you, that it will prove to be your *fault* as well as your *misfortune*. God Almighty gave you all the blessings of life, and you set your heart wholly upon one, and despise or undervalue all the rest; is this his fault or yours? Nay, is it not to be very unthankful to Heaven, as well as very scornful to the rest of the world! is it not to say, Because you have lost one thing God hath given you, you thank him for nothing he has left, and care not what he takes away? Is it not to say,

Since that one thing is gone out of the world, there is nothing left in it which you think can deserve your kindness or esteem? A friend makes me a feast, and sets all before me that his care or kindness could provide; but I set my heart upon one dish alone, and if that happen to be thrown down, I scorn all the rest; and though he sends for another of the same, yet I rise from the table in a rage, and say my friend is my enemy, and has done me the greatest wrong in the world; have I reason, Madam, or good grace in what I do? Or would it become me better to eat of the rest that is before me, and think no more of what had happened, and could not be remedied?

All the precepts of Christianity agree to teach and command us to moderate our passions, to temper our affections towards all things below; to be thankful for the possession, and patient under the loss, whenever he that gave it shall see fit to take away. Your extreme fondness was, perhaps, as displeasing to God before, as now your extreme affliction; and your loss may have been a punishment for your faults in the manner of enjoying what you had. It is, at least, pious to ascribe all the ill that befalls us to our own demerits rather than to injustice in God; and it becomes us better to adore all the issues of his providence in the effects, than enquire into the causes: for submission is the only way of reasoning between a creature and its Maker;

ker; and contentment in his will is the greatest duty we can pretend to, and the best remedy we can apply to all our misfortunes.

But, Madam, though religion were no party in your case, and that for so violent and injurious a grief you had nothing to answer to God, but only to the *world* and *yourself*; yet I very much doubt how you would be acquitted. We bring into the world with us a poor needy uncertain life, short at the longest, and unquiet at the best; all the imaginations of the witty and the wise have been perpetually busied to find out the ways how to revive it with pleasures, or relieve it with diversions; how to compose it with ease, and settle it with safety. To some of these ends have been employed the institutions of law-givers, the reasonings of philosophers, the inventions of poets, the pains of labouring, and the extravagancies of voluptuous men. All the world is perpetually at work about nothing else, but only that our poor mortal lives should pass the easier and happier for that little time we possess them, or else end the better when we lose them. Upon this occasion riches came to be coveted, honours to be esteemed, friendship and love to be pursued, and virtues themselves to be admired in the world. Now, Madam, is it not to bid defiance to all mankind to condemn their universal opinions and designs, if, instead of passing your life as well and easily, you resolve to

pass it as ill and as miserably as you can? You grow insensible to the conveniences of riches, the delights of honour and praise, the charms of kindness or friendship, nay, to the observance or applause of virtues themselves; for who can you expect, in these excesses of passion, will allow you to shew either temperance or fortitude, to be either prudent or just? and for your friends, I suppose, you reckon upon losing their kindness, when you have sufficiently convinced them they can never hope for any of yours, since you have none left for yourself or any thing else. You declare, upon all occasions, you are incapable of receiving any comfort or pleasure in any thing that is left in this world; and I assure you, Madam, none can ever love you, that can have no hopes ever to please you.

Among the several inquiries and endeavours after the happiness of life, the sensual men agree in pursuit of every pleasure they can start, without regarding the pains of the chase, the weariness when it ends, or how little the quarry is worth. The busy and ambitious fall into the more lasting pursuits of power and riches; the speculative men prefer tranquillity of mind before the different motions of passion and appetite, or the common successions of desire and satiety, of pleasure and pain; but this may seem too dull a principle for the happiness of life, which is ever in motion; and passions are perhaps the stings,  
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without which they say no honey is made; yet I think all sorts of men have ever agreed, they ought to be our servants and not our masters; to give us some agitation for entertainment or exercise, but never to throw our reason out of its seat. Perhaps I would not always sit still, or would be sometimes on horse-back; but I would never ride a horse that galls my flesh, or shakes my bones, or that runs away with me as he pleases, so as I can neither stop at a river or precipice. Better no passions at all, than have them too violent; or such alone, as instead of heightning our pleasures, afford us nothing but vexation and pain.

In all such losses as your Ladyship's has been, there is something that common nature cannot be denied; there is a great deal that good nature may be allowed: but all excessive and outrageous grief or lamentation for the dead, was accounted among the ancient Christians, to have something of heathenish; and, among the civil nations of old, to have something of barbarous; and therefore it has been the care of the first to moderate it by their precepts, and the latter to restrain it by their law. The longest time that has been allowed to the forms of mourning by the custom of any country, and in any relation, has been but that of a year, in which space the body is commonly supposed to be mouldered away to earth, and to retain no more figure

of what it was; but this has been given only to the loss of parents, of husband or wife. On the other side, to children under age, nothing has been allowed; and I suppose, with particular reason, the common ground of all general customs, perhaps because they die in innocence, and without having tasted the miseries of life; so as we are sure they are well when they leave us, and escape much ill, which would, in all appearance, have befallen them if they had stayed longer with us. Besides a parent may have twenty children, and so his mourning may run through all the best of his life, if his losses are frequent of that kind; and our kindness to children so young, is taken to proceed from common opinions, or fond imaginations, not friendship or esteem; and to be grounded upon entertainment, rather than use in the many offices of life: nor would it pass from any person besides your Ladyship, to say you lost a companion and a friend at nine years old; though you lost one indeed, who gave the fairest hopes that could be of being both in time, and every thing else that was esteemable and good: but yet, that itself, God only knows, considering the changes of humour and disposition, which are as great as those of feature and shape the first sixteen years of our lives, considering the chances of time, the infection of company, the snares of the world, and the passions of youth; so that the most excellent and agreeable creature



ture of that tender age, and that seemed born under the happiest stars, might, by the course of years and accidents, come to be the most miserable herself, and more trouble to her friends by living long, than she could have been by dying young.

Yet after all, Madam, I think your loss so great, and some measure of your grief so deserved, that would all your passionate complaints, all the anguish of your heart do any thing to retrieve it; could tears water the lovely plant, so as to make it grow again after once it is cut down; would sighs furnish new breath, or could it draw life and spirits from the wasting of yours; I am sure your friends would be so far from accusing your passion, that they would encourage it as much and share it as deep as they could. But, alas! the eternal laws of the creation extinguish all such hopes, forbid all such designs: nature gives us many children and friends to take them away, but takes none away to give them us again. And this makes the excesses of grief to have been so universally condemned as a thing unnatural, because so much in vain; whereas nature, they say, does nothing in vain: as a thing so unreasonable, because so contrary to our own designs; for we all design to be well, and at ease, and by grief we make ourselves ill of imaginary wounds, and raise ourselves troubles most properly out of the dust, whilst our ravings and complaints

are but like arrows shot up into the air at no mark, and so to no purpose, but only to fall back upon our heads, and destroy ourselves, instead of recovering or revenging our friends.

Perhaps, Madam, you will say, this is your design, or if not, your desire; but I hope you are not yet so far gone, or so desperately bent: your Ladyship knows very well your life is not your own, but his that lent it you to manage, and preserve the best you could, and not to throw it away, as if it came from some common hand. It belongs, in a great measure to your country, and your family; and therefore by all human laws, as well as divine, self-murder has ever been agreed on as the greatest crime, and is punished here with the utmost shame, which is all that can be inflicted upon the dead. But is the crime much less to kill ourselves by a slow poison, than by a sudden wound? Now if we do it, and know we do it by a long and a continual grief, can we think ourselves innocent? What great difference is there if we break our hearts or consume them; if we pierce them, or bruise them; since all determines in the same death, as all arises from the same despair? But what if it goes not so far? It is not indeed so bad as might be, but that does not excuse it from being very ill: though I do not kill my neighbour, is it no hurt to wound him, or to spoil him of the conveniences of life? The greatest crime is for a man to kill himself; is it a small  
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one to wound himself by anguish of heart, by grief or despair to ruin his health, to shorten his age, to deprive himself of all the pleasures, or eates, or enjoyments of life?

Next to the mischiefs we do ourselves, are those we do our children and our friends, as those who deserve best of us, or at least deserve no ill. The child you carry about you, what has that done, that you should endeavour to deprive it of life, almost as soon as you bestow it? Or if at the best you suffer it to live to be born, yet, by your ill usage of yourself, should so much impair the strength of its body and health, and perhaps the very temper of its mind, by giving it such an infusion of melancholy, as may serve to discolour the objects, and disrelish the accidents it may meet with in the common train of life? But this is one you are not yet acquainted with; what will you say to another you are? Were it a small injury to my Lord *Capel*, to deprive him of a mother, from whose prudence and kindness he may justly expect the cares of his health and education, the forming of his body, and the cultivating of his mind; the seeds of honour and virtue, and thereby the true principles of a happy life? How has my Lord of *Essex* deserved that you should go about to lose him a wife he loves with so much passion, and which is more, with so much reason; so great an honour and support to his family, so great a hope to his fortune,  
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and comfort to his life? Are there so many left of your own great family, that you should desire in a manner wholly to reduce it, by suffering the greatest and almost last branch of it to wither away before its time? or is your country in this age so stored with great persons, that you should envy it those we may justly expect from so noble a race?

Whilst I had any hopes your tears would ease you, or that your grief would consume itself by liberty and time, your Ladyship knows very well I never once accused it, nor ever increased it, like many others, by the common formal ways of assuaging it; and this I am sure is the first office of this kind I ever went about to perform otherwise than in the most ordinary forms. I was in hope what was so violent could not be so long; but when I observed it to grow stronger with age, and increase like a stream the further it run; when I saw it draw out to so much unhappy consequences, and threaten no less than your child, your health, and your life; I could no longer forbear this endeavour, nor end it without begging of your Ladyship for God's sake, and for your own, for your childrens and your friends, for your country's and your families, that you would no longer abandon yourself to so disconsolate a passion, but that you would at length awaken your piety, give way to your prudence, or at least rouse up the invincible spirit of the *Piercies*, that never yet shrunk at  
any

any disaster; that you would sometimes remember the great honours and fortunes of your family, not always the losses; cherish those veins of good humour that are sometimes so natural to you, and fear up those of ill that would make you so unnatural to your children, and to yourself; but, above all, that you would enter upon the cares of your health, and your life, for your friends sake at least, if not for your own. For my part, I know nothing could be to me so great an honour and satisfaction, as if your Ladyship would own me to have contributed towards this cure; but, however, none can perhaps more justly pretend to your pardon for the attempt, since there is none, I am sure, that has always had at heart a greater honour for your Ladyship's family, nor can have for your person more devotion and esteem."

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## S E C T. VI.

*Conclusion of Consolations under the Loss of*  
FRIENDS.

SUCH is the advice which this great man gives to enforce the duty of submission to God's will; a duty, as he well observes, most acceptable to God, and most becoming us. And, I trust, that a serious reflection on these arguments on what hath been offered in this  
and

and the former sections to instruct and comfort, will not fail of its desired effect; but that, whenever we are tried with the loss of friends, the considerations drawn from a regard to God, to our deceased friends, to our ownelves, and to others that survive, will render us patient and resigned, and enable us to say, in the words of the most eminent Pattern of resignation, *Father, thy will be done!*

How blessed is such a temper! what a source of everlasting comforts! Surely we shall be anxious to obtain it, especially as there is so great need of it amongst such a variety of changes and chances as human nature is heir to; and, to obtain it, permit me to observe, in conclusion, one way will be to know and to remove the great obstacles and impediments to it. These are *unbelief*, which, in whatever degree it prevails, lessens the influence of invisible things. Did we believe the sincere word of God, did we firmly and undoubtedly rely on the promises of Christ, how could we sorrow, as men without hope, for those that sleep in him, for those that sleep the happy slumber of death to awaken to immortality and glory! the stronger our faith, the greater will be our resignation and comfort.

*Impatience*, and an *indulgence* of *self-will*, is another great impediment to resignation; this is, in all respects, an unhappiness. Parents should early look to this evil in their  
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offspring; from an indulgence of self-will in childhood what miseries are often treasured up for our growing years! Indeed, no people have their will less than they who are for having it always; they draw more troubles upon themselves, and feel them deeper. Take away self-will, and you take away a thousand sorrows which self-will creates to itself, and from which resignation totally delivers.

Too great expectations from the world and the things of it, is another impediment to this heavenly temper; the higher we rise in our expectations and opinions of things, the lower we fall in the vexations of disappointment. We cannot expect too little from a vain, delusive, and transitory scene like the present. Very strong *affections* also make way for great sorrows, and render submission to providence more difficult. We should be careful, in all our affections for temporal blessings, to remember, that they are mortal and mutable.

An unwillingness to reflect on scenes of parting makes parting more painful, and resignation more uneasy; he that will die well, must die daily: so he who will resign well, must practice upon resignation, and frequently search into his own mind.—What if I should return home this evening and find my house in flames? That fair estate, which is now the supply of my wants, what if it should take wings and fly away? what if the desire of my eyes should be taken off with a  
Q stroke.

stroke; or that pretty and beloved child, I should see it lie a dead corpse? that which I now lay in my bosom, I should then not be able to bear in my sight? What should I then do? how should I then behave? am I prepared for such a case? If not, I have the more reason to think of it beforehand. If I am prepared for it, then I can the better bear to think of it now; or else how shall I bear the thing itself, when, by refusing to think of it at all beforehand, I have continued to make it more intolerably afflictive. Sudden and unexpected evils always affect us most; the mind bears with fortitude what it foresees, and is prepared to encounter.

Lastly, another impediment to resignation is an over-weening opinion of our own *deserts*. This leads us to think that God hath dealt hardly with us; whereas, alas, would we but remember that all we have is his free gift, that we neither have nor can deserve any thing from him; nay, rather that we deserve punishment only;—we shall bow our heads with true submission. Humility is the ground work of almost every virtue, but especially of resignation; and when we reflect seriously on ourselves, surely we can never be deficient in humility!

On ourselves, who shortly must follow the beloved friends whom we lament;—must shortly mingle, like them, with the dust of the earth, and enter into the unknown world!

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of the blessings of which we are satisfied, want of resignation will certainly deprive us; and therefore as the hope of once more meeting our dear departed friends in glory is one of the strongest motives for comfort, so ought it to be the strongest motive for *resignation*, if we wish that hope to be rationally founded! Let us therefore consider ourselves and our friends only as so many pilgrims and sojourners, travelling forward to our father's house; let us consider those who are departed only as arrived there something before us; and though we may tenderly lament the loss of their sweet society, the endearments of their friendship, the kindness and support of their aid; though all we love and all we esteem is withdrawn, when they are withdrawn from us; yet let us console our hearts with this pleasing remembrance, that we too shall shortly finish our journey, that we too shall shortly lay aside our palmer's weeds, these robes of mortality; and shall shortly quit these houses of clay: which surely we may quit more contentedly, when all, who are valuable to us, have already forsaken them, and are waiting to receive us in a place, where arguments of consolation shall no more be needful, where the tear shall for ever be wiped from our eyes, and the bitterness of sorrow for ever removed from our hearts!

There, oh there may we meet all our Christian friends, with whom we have travelled

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peacefully

peacefully together through the bad roads of this life; there may we meet all our deceased friends whom we loved here below; and there may we for ever enjoy the happy fruits of our own constant endeavours to obey the commands, and to resign, as dutiful children, to the better will of our Father and our God in Jesus Christ our only Lord and Saviour. Amen.

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## S E C T. VI.

*Consolations under the Loss of Estate or Fortune.*

**T**HOUGH there is nothing so certain as our departure from this world, when we must relinquish every acquisition, and leave behind us all we hold dear; and though in this view the love of wealth, and the pursuits of avarice are vainer than vanity, and absurd beyond contempt; yet we may observe, with pity and astonishment, that this pernicious vice cleaves to the soul with the most tenacious adherence; nay, and often cleaves more closely the nearer men are to their end; who, sorrowful to think, frequently are found more attached to this world, as the time of their continuance in it grows shorter, and the power of their enjoying it grows less.—To preserve men from an evil so dangerous in itself, and so

so hateful to the God of bounty, that God, in his wise providence, often sees fit to deprive men of their boasted idol, to give wings to their riches, and to reduce them to a more humble state, that they may learn a better reliance, and entertain a more rational hope. While, from others, he is pleased wholly to withhold these great means of false dependence, and to preserve them from the temptations of riches, by keeping them always in the school of poverty. Poverty has its evils many and great; the loss of wealth and fortune is severely afflictive, much more difficult perhaps to be borne than native and continued poverty; yet many are the comforts which religion hath to offer to those who wring beneath the burden of either of these distresses. And as we have offered arguments of consolation under the loss of *health* and of *friends*, we will now endeavour to suggest such arguments of comfort to those who lament the loss of their fortunes, and to those who feel the afflictions of poverty, as reason and the religion of Christ will supply. And though such arguments may appear cold and unperuasive to those, who favoured of providence, enjoy all those blessings which wealth and independence bestow; yet let them not object, that the unfortunate and the poor, who have none of these distinguished felicities to cheer and to console them, that they claim a part in our attention, that they

have a large share in the consolations of Christ; for surely poverty and distress, surely want and necessity, amidst their complicated woes, call for the soothing tenderness of humanity, and demand all the sympathetic kindness which happier and more favoured brethren and fellow-christians can bestow.

In the first place then, let us endeavour to suggest some arguments of consolation to those who have known the misfortune of change; who feel the difficulties of want aggravated by the knowledge and enjoyment of former plenty. Those evils that we have been inured to, as being bred with us from our cradle, become so familiar, that we are little moved with their presence; but those into which we fall suddenly, from an outward and flourishing felicity of estate, are almost ready to overwhelm us. But if our care be not to want those better riches which can make, and which alone can make the soul happy, we shall not be too much or too deeply concerned for the loss of these trivial and perishing possessions, which prove, by their loss, that they are not real goods: for real goods could not have been lost, since that good, which is capable of loss, as it is unsatisfying in the time of an imperfect and uncertain enjoyment, so in losing it becomes evil, and is therefore unworthy our mind's attachment. Riches in their very nature are fluctuating and unsure; *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that*  
*which*

*which is not?* wilt thou place thy affections upon that which hath no solid and certain continuance? For *riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven!* Who then would be so unwise as to fix his heart upon that which can never satisfy his heart's desires; which is so likely to forsake and deceive him, and which *he himself* must one day necessarily forsake, though it should remain constant to him all the days of his life? How much wiser to set our heart upon that excellent and enduring wealth which will satisfy all our wishes, and can never be taken from us, which shall never leave us, and which we shall never leave!—Covetousness of this wealth is honourable and will be blessed; and he, who earnestly covets this, will never lament the loss of earthly riches immoderately.

And as earthly riches are not goods in themselves, properly speaking, so neither can we, with propriety, call them our's. Here we found them; and what is a melancholy consideration to the covetous heart, though to the wise man an argument of comfort, here we must leave whatever we possess! What have we of them, at the best, but their use; avarice indeed, unmerciful to itself, hath not even the use of them, and yet all it can leave of them, even to its heirs, is only this *use: We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out!* We may blush to hear a

heathen philosopher say, "All that is mine I carry about me;" when many of us Christians, professing a religion whose sole hope is in heaven, are ready to embrace those things most closely to us, and to esteem them as most our own, which are not only without us, but are earthly and perishing! It is an unanswerable question which God puts to the rich man in the parable, when his soul was summoned to leave its promised felicity, *Then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided!* perhaps a stranger's, perhaps a false executor's, perhaps an enemy's! Those very riches and possessions which have engrossed the heart, and, possibly, ruined the soul for ever, may be the subject of litigation amongst nearest relations; may fall to their share whom you never valued in life, who will never remember you with gratitude in death, and who, if they did, could avail nothing to the future welfare of the soul. Then let us not call such things our own; but call we that ours which we shall be sure to carry away with us, which will be sure to accompany our souls in the last passage, or to follow them; call we our own, (for these are strictly such,) our heavenly and Christian graces, our charitable works, our virtuous actions, our holy dispositions; these, these are the never-failing treasures which we should lay up there, *where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, where thieves do not break through nor steal.*

Consider

Consider again that your possessions are not so properly lost as restored. He parted with more than many men have to part with, who said, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; for whether it were the gift of patrimony, or the acquisition of providence and industry, *The Lord gave*; he is the sovereign dispenser of all earthly goods,—and whether it were by the hands of *Chaldeans* or *Sabeans*, by the violence of winds, or waves, or fire; *the Lord hath taken away*. For his hand is in all, his providence over all; he did but give, and he doth but take away his own. *Mine are the cattle, saith he, upon a thousand hills; yea the whole earth is mine, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein.* And he may well say so, for his Almighty word created all; *he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods*. Shall we not then submit to the disposals of this uncontrollable Sovereign? what reason can we have to complain when he takes away any of those gifts, which are so peculiarly his own?—Nay, and might we not more justly say, that these things are not *given* but *lent* to us; they are put into our hands a while, till the great Owner shall think fit to re-demand them! And can we repine and be dissatisfied when we are called to restore what we had borrowed?—Nay, that we may lay yet less claim to these transitory things of earth, let us consider them as not given or lent, but *left* in our hands

our hands by the owner to employ for his use, till he shall require them again with proper increase. What then have we to do but to improve them all we can? if it pleases God to take off this charge, by whatever means, we cannot say we have been spoiled, but we have been eased; *To whom much is given, of him much will be required.* It is of great consequence to consider the gifts of providence in this view: while we appropriate them to ourselves and embrace them as our own, we shall neither improve them properly, nor give them up submissively.

But possibly this change of fortune may be intended greatly for your good. How many examples have we had of those who have been cumbered with plenty, with the many things of this world, so that they could not raise their thoughts to spiritual concerns? who yet, when this weight has been taken off, have elevated their souls to heaven! How many have we known who had lost their lives, if, (with the philosopher,) they had not foregone their gold; yea, how many that had lost their souls! the whole vessel had sunk in this boisterous sea, if the burden of this earthly freight had not been cast overboard. Why then should we be much troubled to lose that which might have undone us in the keeping? *How hardly,* says our blessed Saviour, *shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God; shall they that trust in their riches,* as he explains it  
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in another place. Riches are not in themselves pernicious, they do not necessarily and naturally exclude from the kingdom of heaven, but only as they lead to such tempers and dispositions, and, especially, to such a trust in them, as alienates the heart from God. When this is the case, it is indeed easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for such a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And we may reasonably and piously conclude, when it happens, that we are delivered from them, that they would have had this unhappy effect upon us, if God had not been pleased to take them from us. We should thank him therefore, instead of murmuring at him, and be well satisfied to exchange the present gratification of some desires for the hope of an eternal inheritance, where all our just desires will be more than gratified.

But indeed the loss of wealth is not the loss of a perfect good, considered in any view; for wealth hath its cares and great ones too. He that multiplies riches, multiplies troubles, is the saying of a very wise man, which every man's experience verifies. And our blessed Saviour hath joined together *the cares of the world*, and *the deceitfulness of riches*; nay, he hath told us, what every day we see the truth of, That *a man's life*, neither the happiness nor continuance of it, *consisteth in the multitude of the things which he possesseth*. We have heard of one who was glad to be rid of his  
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lately-found bag that he might sleep again; and the man was noted and envied at home for his wealth, who could experimentally say, "The poor man laughs more heartily and more frequently than the rich." Riches, faith he again, are thorns with which men never cease to vex themselves; when these thorns are taken from us, why should we murmur at our own ease? why should we refuse to slumber quietly on our homely pallet, when we are no longer kept awake by those many anxieties which often drive slumber from the rich man's eyes on the softest bed of down!

And as the loss of wealth delivers from many cares, so doth it from much slavery! men are often not so much possessed of riches as possessed by them: their wealth is their master, and a hard master too it frequently proves, not allowing to its poor slave sufficient diet, competent rest, or any the least indulgence. If you were so miserable as to be such a drudge to what you have lost, you may well rejoice in the loss; for the loss is liberty; and you are delivered from a slavery, worse and more dangerous far, than any bodily captivity; for it enslaved your soul, and would have enslaved it eternally.

## S E C T. VII.

*Contemplations under the Loss of ESTATE;—  
Exhortation to the POOR.*

**W**HILE you reflect on the danger from which loss of wealth may deliver, consider again how this loss came upon you. If from your own improper conduct, you have the more reason to bear with patience the burden which you have pulled upon your own shoulders; if from the oppression and injury of others, you will endure this cross more comfortably, because your own hand hath not been guilty of imposing it. And if God think fit to send poverty to your door by the message of men, for the sake of him that sent it, you should bid it welcome; and for its own sake should entertain it without complaint, as being that which will repay you, if properly used, with many blessings, blessings of rest, (for these are the virtues and the blessings of poverty;) quiet rest and security, humble patience, contented humility, and a low estimation of all earthly things. No one of which virtues perhaps had ever approached your dwelling in a prosperous condition; and of consequence left you no hope of future glory. And while you reflect upon these advantages, the loss of temporal things will appear inconsiderable; much more so, when you turn your thoughts upon  
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upon that miserable rich voluptuary in the gospel, who, in torment, could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue! how happy had the loss of his fortune in this world proved to him, if, with that loss, he had learned humility, and the virtues of poverty, and so acquired heaven!

But, moreover, consider what it is that you lose. You enjoy not your former conveniences for lodging, diet, attendance—And is this all? why numbers both Heathens and Christians have done that out of choice which you complain of as a grievous misfortune. *Attalus* the philosopher might have lain upon down, yet he calls for and praises the bed and the pillow which would not yield to his body. *Seneca* speaks of his usual dining without a table. The austerities of the Christians in the first centuries were such as would scarcely be credited in our days, they were so severe. The worst condition amongst us is easy and delicate in comparison with that of those men, who voluntarily imposed upon themselves such severities, as we should be loth to undergo even from others cruelty. And, at the worst, whatever accommodations we may want, a little time will deliver us from all such necessities; and the discipline of the body will serve to the exaltation of the soul.

Besides, the wants, the real wants of human nature are few;—we have lost superfluities;—have we necessaries left, let us be  
thankful

thankful for what we have, and forget what we had. Do but lay aside the thoughts of superfluities, (which many good men have judged necessary in the midst of affluence,) and what are you the worse for the loss of what lay by to look at, but could not be used; and though your condition be worse, yet if your mind be satisfied, all is well. Contentment stands not in quantities nor qualities, but in the inward disposition of the heart; that alone can multiply numbers and enhance values; that alone can turn the honest homespun into rich velvet; the meanest fare into delicacies, and can make one attendant many officers. *Having food and raiment,* says the Apostle, *let us be therewith content,* for if we have no more, we shall, at the end, only be as we once were, and as we must assuredly once be;—"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."

The sum of the matter is this; wealth and an abundance of the things of this world by no means constitute or procure human happiness. The desire of them is insatiable, and when the thirst once possesses the soul, there is no possibility of allwaging it. The desire leads to innumerable evils, and too commonly withdraws the heart wholly from God;—"For they that will be rich, *per fas et nefas*, right or wrong, who are resolved to amass wealth, *fall into temptation,* says the apostle, *and a snare, and*  
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*into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have been seduced from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*—Every wise man, and much more every sincere Christian will therefore put bounds to his desires, as well convinced, that there is no end of desiring; that the more a man hath, the more he will still wish to have, if he indulges such wishes; and that the shortest way to be rich is not by enlarging our estates, but by contracting our desires. While he is satisfied that the largest possessions can neither arrest the stroke of death, nor procure him happiness here or hereafter; which is only to be had from a quiet and contented *mind*, resigned to the will of God, thankful for all he gives, well pleased with all he takes away; steadfast in duty mean time, and fixed in happy hope of those riches which can never fade nor ever fail. And whenever the loss of wealth brings the mind to these reflections, draws us off from a love of the world, shews us the true value of earthly things, and the true value of eternal ones, and enables us to take up our cross and follow our Master; that loss is so far from a misfortune, that we have the highest reason to bless God for it now, and shall have eternal  
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nal reason, we may justly presume, to bless him for it hereafter.

Let me observe, in conclusion, that while, amidst poverty, men have many advantages as to their future concerns over the rich, are liable to fewer temptations, must be supposed less attached to the earth, and are in less danger of being enervated by vanity; so are they under the peculiar protection of Providence; nay, they have many and especial promises given them of their Saviour's regard, if they behave in a manner suitable to their station, demean themselves with becoming humility to their superiors, and with proper resignation to their heavenly Father's will. Otherwise a state of poverty, singly considered, is no more acceptable to God than a state of plenty; he decreed both, and placed his creatures equally dear to him in each. It is the use of these stations, it is exerting the graces and virtues peculiar to them, which alone renders them acceptable to God, and well-pleasing in his sight; and there is no doubt but the poor man, who acts consistently in his station, and humbly walks in the paths of the gospel, will meet with a reward no less excellent than the most wealthy and noble. Indeed, the poor have one peculiar comfort attending them, which is, that the Son of God himself, when he came into this world, despised its pomp and chose its poverty; though he were Lord of all, yet he became servant to all;

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though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich! Through him, you, in that station, may attain those riches which will well compensate all your present evils: what though you struggle under many difficulties; what though you enjoy not what are called the pomps and pleasures of a transitory world; what though you labour with unwearied toil, and are often not unacquainted with the hardships of hunger and cold, and the most pressing wants of nature, yet let not these things depress your souls, or weaken your dependence upon God. He is your Father, and he thought good to place you in this situation, rich and poor, bond and free, are all one in his sight; he offers his precious gospel and his dear Son to you as well as to the mighty of the earth, and if you patiently endure, through this short trial, behold for the raiment of meanness and of shame, you shall be clothed with the robes of immortality and honour.

Suffer these words of consolation, you who have received marks of superior kindness from heaven;—consolation to those for whom our bowels, as men, cannot but be moved, and whose difficulties in life what Christian can contemplate unconcerned; can contemplate unrelieving, if in their power to relieve? It is a mark given by Christ himself of the divinity of his mission, that the *gospel* is *preached*



*preached to the poor:* they stand most in need of it; they most want instruction and comfort. You who have had the blessings of education cannot be ignorant of, and I would earnestly wish, will never be found deficient in duty. For there is a duty to our poorer brethren, a duty of charity and assistance which you will never be backward to shew, and which, blessed be God, is a virtue, even characteristic of the present humane age.—Oh! may we go on to excel in it, to excel in god-like benevolence and a tender love to those who are redeemed with us by Jesus Christ the common Saviour of rich and poor: So shall the riches, which God hath committed to your trust, be duly improved, and redound to your exceeding felicity and comfort; so will you have cause of particular thanksgiving to God who hath vouchsafed unto you the means of comfortable living here, of diffusing blessedness, and imparting good to others, and of reaping a glorious harvest hereafter: so shall no fear of change of fortune molest you; for while you use your wealth, as God ordains, you need not fear loss, as a correction for the abuse of it. So shall you deliver your patrimonies down to your latest posterity with the blessing of heaven annexed to them: to which end, you will never forget the solemn counsel of the Apostle, “ Charge them, who are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain

riches, but in the living God, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

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## S E C T. VIII.

*Consolations under the Loss of Reputation.*

AFTER having offered what arguments I am able, to teach us submission, to give us comfort under the loss of *Health*, the loss of *Friends*, and the loss of *Fortune*; we are next to consider the case of *Reputation*, and to see what is the proper conduct and proper consolation, either when it is tainted by malicious slander, or forfeited by our own improper behaviour.

The value of reputation, and the high price men are used to set upon it, is evidently seen by that care and caution, by that disregard to toil, and voluntary endurance of the greatest labours and perils, which is frequently submitted to with cheerfulness, to obtain and secure it.—We have many instances to shew, that health and life and friends and fortune have not been deemed so valuable; have been readily given up for the preserva-  
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tion of that good name, which is rather to *be chosen than great riches, and which is better than precious ointment*. And, indeed, as reputation is the grand cement of all worldly transactions, one cannot wonder at a regard for it the most high and venerable; since it is this which gives us credit and esteem in the general, and particularly endears us to those with whom we are more intimately connected. It is valuable too on another account, as it is for the most part the genuine fruit of our good and proper conduct, and therefore the source of true joy to our conscience, witnessing to the sincerity and uprightness of our conversation in this world: in which view it is a kind of earnest, a pledge of that future applause, which the truly virtuous and pious may one day expect from the mouth of him who is unerring in his judgment, and decisive in his sentence. But, as a regard for this good reputation sometimes may lead us into error, by mistaking the great end of it, or expecting it from the wrong object, it may be proper to shew what a good reputation truly is; how far a regard to it is useful and necessary, and what is the proper behaviour when it is falsely and injuriously treated: while we shew, on the other side, what dreadful consequences follow from a disregard to it, and from a loss of it, through ill behaviour; and what, in such a case, is the proper conduct.

First then, let us consider what a good re-

putation is. Now a good reputation is for the most part the consequence of a good and proper behaviour in life. There are, it is certain, some exempt cases; actions may be misrepresented or misunderstood, especially the actions of those who are in higher spheres, and whose motives for acting can neither easily be discovered nor made known with safety. But, in the general, men are just to each other, and an unblameable conduct will, for the most part, produce a good name. But then let us remember, that a *good name* or *reputation* which hath respect only to men, is not that which the scripture means. God is the judge of our conduct as well as the author of our being, and the preserver of our existence. Men cannot discern the springs of our actions or the motives of our undertakings, and therefore may be much mistaken in their judgment of the goodness or badness of an action which they may denominate according to its external tendency; while God, who judgeth according to the intention, may, perhaps, determine it far differently.

The great rule of securing a good reputation therefore is, "A sincere view to the glory of God in all we do;" and a good reputation, strictly speaking, and with respect to God, is that only which ariseth from a conduct directed by this rule, is that which ariseth from a life of *religion, sobriety* and *justice*, in conformity to the law and love of God.

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How valuable such a reputation is, it is easy to discern, as well as how far a regard to it is useful and necessary; it is as useful and necessary as a regard to our eternal salvation: for, unless we direct our lives by this rule, we can neither have the one nor the other.—And agreeable hereto, we may soon be satisfied, that whenever any mere worldly respects run opposite to this true reputation and true interest, we are certainly rather to give up a regard to the world, and to mens opinions of us, than to our virtuous estimation in the sight of God. Our obligations to him are prior to all others, and therefore our first duty must be paid to him. And if any actions are contrary to that duty, they must be forborn, though at the hazard of the good esteem of all the world; or if any actions are agreeable to our duty to him, however opposite to our worldly interests, they must be performed, and the consequence left to the great Searcher of hearts. This may draw upon us various censures from various quarters and on various accounts, as all distinguished virtue, in whatever sphere of life, will be calumnized. But while we act agreeably to the dictates of religion and a good conscience, we need not be concerned, but may leave our good name in the hands of God; for we can never trust our reputation in better hands; and though, perhaps, it may be overshadowed a while by such a conduct, yet it will, at length, emerge with greater lustre,

like the sun from a darkening cloud. The Psalmist therefore advises well, *Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass; and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day.*

Now as a good *reputation* is of so high value, as being *that* which recommends us to God, and endears us to our fellow-creatures; as it affords an exalted joy to the conscience, and renders the present life pleasing and comfortable, it is evident, that we should not by any means be indifferent to it, nor be less careful to preserve, than to obtain it. *Solomon* declares, that it is *rather to be chosen than great riches*; and very wisely; for what are great riches without it? splendid evils and despicable trifles!—Riches and poverty are alike miserable under the loss of it; the one can afford no solid joy, the latter is distracted with a thousand cares, and led into a thousand sins and sufferings.—The best rule therefore to preserve, as well as gain a good name, is always to do well; is to persevere in piety and virtue; is to go on in an even discharge of duty; and then, without anxious solicitude, to leave the issue to God.

“ But what if our good name be injured, what if our reputation be harmed; shall we then sit by unregarding, and suffer the shafts of malevolence and the arrows of censure to fall all around us, without seeking some defence,

fence, and holding up some shield against them?"—In such a case, if you are truly innocent, you have a great Avenger and an impartial Judge; and secure in the integrity of your conscience and the uprightness of your intentions, will commit your cause to him with pleasure, and speedily await the decision here or hereafter. And it will be a great consolation to recollect, that this is an evil against which there is no preservative; innocence itself is no antidote against evil tongues: neither greatness nor goodness can secure any man from unjust calumny which strikes the whitest virtue. Look at the greatest kings and the most holy saints, they have experienced this evil, they have complained of it, but were not able to help themselves: you have the company of the best men the earth ever bore to mitigate any uneasiness that may arise on this account.

But why do I speak of imperfect men, whose highest purity might be spotted with some defilements? look upon the Lord of life, the eternal Son of the ever-living God, and see whether he shared any other lot while he sojourned in the region of mortality? Do you not hear him, for his amiable condescension, branded as a gluttonous man, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners? do you not hear him, for his powerful and wonderful cure of demoniacs, abused as one that casts out devils through Beelzebub the prince  
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of devils? do you not hear him slandered to death for treason against *Cæsar*, and blasphemy against God? do you not hear the multitude say, *He is mad, and hath a devil?*—while to give us a fine picture of distinguished virtue struggling with an evil world, we read some said, *He is a good man; others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people!*—do you not hear him, after his death, charged with *imposture?* and can there be any worse names than *glutton, drunkard, magician, traitor, blasphemer, madman, dæmoniac, impostor?* What Christian can henceforth think much to be slandered with meaner crimes, when he hears the most holy Son of God, in whose mouth was no guile, in whom the prince of this world could find nothing, who lived and died only to do good, and to dispense blessings,—when he hears *him* loaden with such black and infamous calumnies!—“What is a little misrepresentation or a few lashes from tattling tongues, compared with those cruel mockings which that divine Redeemer bare for us.”

Again, consider on what account and for what cause it is that your reputation is censured; if it is for a good cause, you are so far from deserving pity that you might justly be envied. Truth itself hath told us, that, in such a case, we are in the road to blessedness; who then can be uneasy or dissatisfied at what we have the justest reason to rejoice! *Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute*



*secute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake!* charging you boldly, with the vilest crimes and the worst intentions, *Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* Surely this declaration, from the mouth of infinite Truth, must cheer our spirits, amidst all the malice of traducing calumny, amidst every false reproach which falls upon us for our sincere attachment to the cause of Christ, of truth and goodness, and enable us to take up the resolution of *Job, If mine adversary had written a book against me, a book fraught with falshood, bitterness, and vilest abuse, surely I would take it upon my shoulders, as a mark of virtue, and bind it as a crown of honour to my head.*

Consider again, under calumnies, not only for *what*, but by *whom* you are reproached. If it is by certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, (as the sacred writer terms those, who, moved by envy, opposed *Paul* and *Silas*,) why then, thank your own virtue that you are thus envied and abused! Were you as bad as your detractors, you might sit quiet enough; *If ye were of the world, saith our Saviour, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* While the moon sits, and is shrouded in darkness, no dogs bark at her; it is her shining that opens their mouths. Were you either obscure or wicked you might be safe; but if you will be eminently good, in any department

ment of human life, be not surpris'd that you feel the lash of ill tongues. So long as there are men and merit there will be envy; for envy is the shadow of merit. Dean *Swift* says well, "That censure is a tax which merit pays to the public." You should not therefore be dissatisfied when you are called upon to pay this testimony of your merit; for the payment of the tax proves the reality of possession;—you should not be dissatisfied when the *shadow* of that merit shews itself;—the shadow proves the reality of the substance. "They think it strange that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you," saith the chief of the Apostles; and what more excellent instruments had God ever in his church than the blessed Apostles? But what acceptance found they in the earth? *Being defamed, they tell us, we intrat, we are made as the filth of the world; we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men.* Complain if you can of a worse condition than that of these great ambassadors of God! otherwise resolve with the chosen vessel, to pass through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, toward the God of immortality, and the seat of unerring judgment.

Consider again, what censure is in itself; mere air, idle breath; which, if we disregard, can never make one hair of our head white or black. Let those whose hearts are as foul as their names, be troubled with the censures they have justly deserved; but do not you, who

who are falsely calumniated, give so much way to malice, as to pay any regard to its false and iniquitous suggestions; you cannot devise a method more certain to vex a detractor than contempt. Thus you will force *malevolence*, as a wise heathen said, “to drink off the greatest part of her own poison.”

Again, consider the extent of censure, what a poor matter it is. How far do you think the sound of this slander reacheth? perhaps through your own village, perhaps to the next, perhaps farther, through the whole county in which you live? why it is very likely the next county never so much as heard your name; and, if you look further off, as soon may you suppose yourself talked of amongst the antipodes, as in the neighbouring kingdom or province. Nay, but suppose all countries heard that slander, and your name stood rubric upon the column of unmerited infamy; what a small spot of earth is this to which that shame is confined! did you know the vast extent of this unbounded universe, you would easily see in how narrow a corner, either our glory or our dishonour can be pent up, and must confess how little reason we can have to affect the one, or to be disheartened at the other.

And as the limits of slander are narrow, so is the life of it short. Truth is the child of time, ere long she will appear and vindicate the injured and the innocent. Wait upon  
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the God of truth, and he will cause your light to break forth as the morning, and your *righteousness to go before you*. But if otherwise, we shall do well not to be too anxious; for our name here is not only local and momentary, but soon passed over in silence and oblivion. Look at the best of the patriarchs in the word of God; of them only it is remembered, that they were born, lived, begat children and died. Though they trod the earth for so many hundred years, what of their memory remaineth! while, in this view, we less fear the reproach of men, let us consider that there is a *shame* and a reproach which is well worthy our fear; a shame which will be universal, through all the world of angels and of men, and which will be beyond the reach of time; it will be eternal! It is wise to fear this, and to contemn the other in comparison of it. On the contrary, if fame should befriend us so much as to strain her cheeks in founding our praises, and should extol us for virtuous and eminent every way; *alas, how few shall hear her!* and how soon is that noise stilled and forgotten!—In short, while our chief care is to demean ourselves holily, unblameably, and conscientiously in the sight of God and men, we may well leave the rest to God, who will be sure to make his word good in spite of men or devils. *The memory of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.*

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Such are the arguments of consolation which we may well apply to ourselves, when under the lash of false and reproachful lips. But though, in many cases, it may be proper and quite sufficient for a man to trust his cause with God, to support himself with such arguments as these, and to repose himself in the happy testimony of his conscience; yet let us observe, that in some circumstances, a different conduct is absolutely necessary: nor are we commanded, either by religion or reason, tamely to sit down under manifest calumnies, especially if they be such as affect us in a public nature, and tend to prejudice our utility and immediate interest. We are bound, in defence of ourselves, calmly to expostulate, mildly to reprove, gently to urge the injury, and to confute it in a manner the most dispassionate we are able. This done, we are to submit and to go on in our usual blameless manner; and there is no doubt but the force of truth will, at length, prevail; for most assuredly, an uniform practice of religion, justice and sobriety, a conscientious obedience to the laws of Christ, is the best method, at once, to procure and to guard our good name.

An indifference to which is certainly blameworthy, and the source of many evils; as a person can scarcely be indifferent to it, and, at the same time, diligent to maintain that proper behaviour, which is the only security  
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of it: and therefore when we hear, as is sometimes the case, the less discerning say, "That they care not for the world, let people talk as they please, it matters not to them;" we may receive it as a bad omen; it is an ill sign; and, it is too much to be feared, such a disregard to the opinion of the world ariseth from a conduct, which these people are sensible the world cannot approve; and therefore they will be beforehand, and condemn and disapprove the world. This is weak, and an inlet to much evil; for, though upon a religious principle, under the righteous discharge of our duty, and amidst the testimony of a good and applauding conscience, it may be very well to hold the opinion of the world not in too high esteem, lest, through fear of worldly censure, we should be apt to fall into worldly and criminal compliances, yet, for those to despise reputation, who have no just title to it, and who cannot refer to God the Judge of all, for the integrity of their hearts and lives, is only to deceive themselves with a false notion, and to fall into a snare of the devil, which may be likely to entangle their souls for ever.

For it is certain that a regard to reputation, considered only in a moral view, is and may be a great defence of virtue, and a good means to preserve us from the practices of vice; and if this be given up by those who have no higher principle to act by, unhappy must be  
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the consequences. A headlong plunge is made into the foul pit of sin, and when persons have made themselves so odious and abominable thereby, that the best part of their fellow-creatures are compelled to avoid and condemn them; then, as the only remedy, they are ready to defy the world and not to care what people say. But, alas, how sadly do they soon discern their mistake! For what is there so grievous to the human mind, what so afflicting and so hard to be borne, as the contempt, neglect, and abhorrence of the virtuous and the good; of all those whom we know to be the only valuable, and would wish to be the only dear to us? And such is the fatal issue of lost reputation: When your good name is gone, it is impossible that the virtuous can any longer hold communication with you; cut off from them, you must be obliged to seek society amidst those abandoned as yourselves: Evil communications soon corrupt all good manners; you grow more and more familiar with the foul-face of vice. Stung, perhaps, with the reflection of that just disregard, which is the result of such conduct and such lost reputation, men fly to intoxicating draughts, the common resource of uneasy minds; and thus they are often plunged in the pit of vice, of infamy, and ruin; from which it is difficult to be reclaimed: for such will not converse with the virtuous;—indeed the virtuous, for their own sakes, can-

not converse with them; for it is an apostolical injunction, "Not to keep company, not to have any familiar intercourse with men professing Christianity, yet notoriously guilty of scandalous vices." And I know not how any good man, desirous to approve himself to God, can do so, since he not only opposes the divine word, but becomes, by that means, a partaker and an encourager of other mens sins. And when good men act in conformity to this precept, is it any marvel that those, whom they are obliged thus to stigmatize, revile them with the greatest scandal? This must be expected; the drunkards made songs upon me, says the King of *Israel*: those who are lost to reputation, herding with others equally abandoned, have no greater alleviation of their dissatisfaction, than an abuse of those whose lives reprove them; and whose virtuous conduct is a continual censure of their iniquity.

Such are the ill consequences of a loss of reputation, which the following *account* of *Aretini's* conduct may serve to strengthen: *Francis Aretini*, Professor of Law at *Ferrara*, took a very extraordinary method to convince his pupils of the advantages which a good name procures us in life, when all his arguments to that purpose failed. The butchers of *Ferrara* having a custom to leave their meat in the market all night, he went thither with his servant one morning before day, and breaking open their shops, took all their meat.



Two of his pupils, who had bad characters, were accused of the fact and imprisoned; upon which *Aretini* went to the prince, and desired their enlargement, confessing that he himself had committed the crime of which they were charged; but the tenour of his former life, and his well-known good character, made this so improbable, that he was not believed, being thought to make such a confession only to exculpate his pupils. This fully answered his design of demonstrating the happy consequence of a good, and the danger of a bad character: wherefore he produced proper witnesses, both of the transaction and of his declared motive for performing it: and, making compensation to the persons who had lost their meat, he obtained the liberty of his friends, and confirmed them in the principles he desired to inculcate, by a method which could not fail of convincing them. Since then the loss of reputation necessarily involves us in such evils, we may learn from hence how highly to value, and how cautiously to preserve this precious jewel, more to be desired than gold, and preferable to rubies; and how sensibly to be affected, if by any means we have been so unhappy as to forfeit it, as to lose, justly to lose the good esteem of God and of man.

But I am aware upon how tender a point I have fallen, and am ready to answer a question, which may naturally be asked, and to

offer that balm of comfort which may be wanted in such a case.

“What is to be done, you may reasonably enquire, should a person have been so unfortunate as to deviate from the fair and pleasant paths of virtue and piety, as to have forfeited that richest jewel in the Christian’s crown, a good reputation and due esteem both in the sight of God and man?—Is there no hope left for such an one? Is there no way by which they can return and retrieve, or must they be abandoned to all the extremity of distress, and lost in the wide howling wilderness of infamy and despair?” Blessed be God we can answer to this important enquiry with satisfaction; can, with pleasure, acquaint the unhappy wanderer, that neither is the God we serve so austere, as utterly to cast off the offending, if they are willing to return and amend; nor are our fellow-creatures so inexorable as to be unmoved by that change of conduct and regular demeanour, which witnesses a change of principles, and a change of heart. God, whose favour it is most important for us to recover, if we have forfeited it, is a mild and gracious Being, willing and ready to receive returning prodigals, and offering them pardon and peace through the sacrifice of his dear Son, if they will be wise and live to his laws. Our fellow-creatures, —though in some cases rigid virtue may put on too great austerity, and having been frequently

quently deceived, by false pretences to amendment, may be more backward to credit any pretences;—yet our fellow-creatures, in the general, will be just and humane enough; some of the more malevolent cast excepted; such as these will never be satisfied: but, in general, men are ready, with sufficient charity and tenderness, to receive again into their esteem, when the proof of our deserving it is obvious to their notice: and till then we can neither expect nor desire it.

So that in order to regain lost reputation our one single business is to change our life, and to amend those evils which have caused the loss. And, as you have heard, true reputation respects our conduct both to God and to man, our first and prime endeavour must be to reconcile ourselves to God, to repent of our evil doings, to apply for pardon through faith in Christ, and to enter upon a new life; a perseverance in which, and in an habitual course of virtue, will not fail to restore us to that good opinion of our fellow-creatures, which is so justly estimable, and so highly to be valued by every reasonable and social being.

Thus then having shewn the nature and importance of reputation, and suggested some arguments of consolation when it is falsely aspersed or really lost; let me observe, that it greatly behoves us as Christians and as men, to be very careful of each others reputation;

this is a jewel of the first importance; and though it be but too true that men think themselves licensed to treat the good name of others without much respect, yet there is a cruelty, which our religion assures us, is highly criminal, in passing rash and hasty censures to the prejudice of our brethren and fellow Christians. The great duty of Christianity is *love*; and this love should teach us to value the reputation of others, which, in many cases, is their life, and to be cautious and tender of it as we are of our own. How can the malevolent censurer, who sits in morose judgment upon all about him, acquit himself in the sight of God; or imagine he hath any part or portion in the redemption of that Saviour, who gave his life—such was his love—for mankind?

But when we consider further, that all of us partake of the same common nature, a nature sadly depraved and very imperfect; that the very best of us are conscious of a thousand and ten thousand offences, and that every one of us must say, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified:” When we consider this, as well as the different natural dispositions of men, some more reserved, some more open, some more cheerful, some more melancholy; dispositions which must often give a different colour and appearance to actions: surely humanity will teach us benevolence,

nevolence, the law of kindness will be on our tongues, we shall be forward to exculpate our neighbours, to assign the best (and not basely to suggest and insinuate the worst) motives for their actions; to excuse the unavoidable infirmities of nature, and, with a sweet and gentle complacency, which will infallibly endear us to our fellow-creatures, continually defend the good name, and point out to view the amiable part of mens characters. This is Christian, god-like, humane;—it assimilates us to angels and to God: while malevolence, censure, ill-nature, and envy render us hateful and devilish in the sight of men, and separate us as far as possible from that heaven, whose God, and whose law, is *love*.

And while, for others, we are thus careful to discharge the part of fellow-creatures, and fellow-christians, of good and of good-natured men; it will be our care to preserve, no less exactly our own reputation, which, in various cases, is of so great importance as to merit the utmost attention. It will not therefore be enough for us to abstain from evil, we must abstain from all appearance of it, and preserve our good name as white and unblemished as we may. But if, notwithstanding our best and most conscientious efforts, reproach and calumny should still be our lot, we are to rest easy under the approving testimony of a sincere conscience, and to persevere in the unbiaſſed practice of undiſſembled religion and

virtue. This will be a bulwark to us amidst the thunder of the loudest reproach; and while we can look up, amidst the sincere and best discharge of our duty, to an assisting God and an approving Saviour, while we can console ourselves with the testimony of a good conscience, we may contemn, with joyfulness, the voice of every reviler! and need not fear, but, when we have weathered out the tempest, we shall anchor securely in that haven of eternal rest, which no storms of malice ever vex, which no billows of passion ever disquiet: where the injured reputation shall be cleared from every dishonest aspersion, and our good name and righteousness be made bright as the light, and unclouded as the noon-day.

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## S E C T. IX.

*Consolations under the Loss of OUTWARD SENSES, SIGHT, HEARING, &c.*

**I**N the following Sections we will endeavour to offer some consolations to those who lament *the Loss of Outward Senses*; who are unhappy under *the Want of Children*; and who feel *the Inconveniencies of Old Age*. First then, let us apply to those who lament the Loss of Outward Senses.

“ Thou

“ Thou hast lost thine eyes \*, a loss which all the world is unable to repair; thou art hereby condemned to a perpetual darkness; For, *the light of the body is the eye, and if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* Couldst thou have foreseen this evil, thou hadst, perhaps, anticipated the loss, by weeping out those eyes for grief, which thou must forgo. There are but two ways by which any outward comfort can have access to the soul, the eye and the ear; one of them is now fore-closed for ever; yet, know, thou hast two other inward eyes which can abundantly supply the want of these of thy body, the eye of reason and the eye of faith; the one as a man, the other as a Christian †. Answerable where-  
unto

\* From Bishop Hall.

† Milton pathetically laments his loss of sight, and finely refers to this source of comfort under it:

————— Thee [Light] I revisit safe,  
And feel thy sov'reign vital lamp: but thou  
Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowl in vain  
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn!  
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs,  
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet not the more  
Cease I to wander, where the muses haunt,  
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,  
Smit with the love of sacred song: but chief  
Thee *Sion*, and the flow'ry brooks beneath,  
That wash thy hallow'd feet, and warbling flow,  
Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget  
Those other two equal'd with me in fate,  
(O! where I equal'd with them in renown!)  
*Blind Thamyris*, and blind *Mæcœnides*.  
Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move  
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird  
Sings darkling, and in shallow covert hid

unto there is a double light apprehended by them, rational and divine; *Solomon* tells thee of the one, *The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly*; the beloved Disciple tells thee of the other, *God is light; and we walk in the light, as he is in the light*. Now these two lights are as much above that outward and visible light,

Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year  
Seasons return, but not to me returns  
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,  
Or light of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,  
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine:  
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark  
Surrounds me; from the cheerful ways of men  
Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair,  
Presented with an universal blank  
Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out!  
So much the rather thou, celestial light,  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her pow'rs  
Irradiate; there plant eyes; all mist from thence  
Purge and disperse; that I may see and tell  
Of things invisible to mortal sight.

There is also a fine passage on this subject in *Sir John Denham's Sophy*.

O happiness of blindness! now no beauty  
Inflames my lust; no other's good, my envy;  
Or misery, my pity; no man's wealth  
Draws my respect; nor poverty my scorn:  
Yet still I see enough! man to himself  
Is a large prospect, rais'd above the level  
Of his low creeping thoughts; if then I have  
A world within myself, that world should be  
My empire; there I'll reign, commanding freely  
And willingly obey'd, secure from fear  
Of foreign forces, or domestick treasons,  
And hold a monarchy more free, more absolute  
'Than in my father's seat; and looking down  
With scorn, or pity, on the slipp'ry state  
Of kings, will tread upon the neck of fate.



light, whereof thou art bereaved, as that light is above darkness; if therefore, by the eye of reason, thou shalt attain to the clear sight of intelligible things, and by the eye of faith to the sight of things supernatural and divine, the improvement of these better eyes shall make a large amends for the want of thy bodily sight.

Thy sight is lost; let me tell thee what *Antony* the hermit said, though blind, to *Didymus* of *Alexandria*; "Let it not trouble thee, O *Didymus*, that thou art bereft of carnal eyes, for thou lackedst only those eyes which mice and flies and lizards have; but rejoice that thou hast those eyes which the angels have, whereby they see God, and by which thou art enlightened with a great measure of knowledge." Make this good of thyself, and thou wilt not be too much discomforted with the absence of thy bodily eyes.

Thine eyes are lost; the chief comfort of thy life is gone with them; *The light is sweet, saith Solomon, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.* Hath not God done this purposely, that he might shut thee out from all earthly objects, that thou mightest so much the more intently fix thyself upon him, and seek after those spiritual comforts which are to be found in a better light. Behold, the sun is the most glorious thing that the bodily eyes can possibly see; thy spiritual eyes may see him, who made that goodly and glorious creature,

creature, and therefore must needs be infinitely more glorious than what he made. If thou canst now see him the more, how hast thou but gained by thy loss?

Thou art become blind; certainly, it is a sore affliction. The men of *Jabesh-Gilead* offered to comply with the tyrant of the *Amonites* so far as to serve him; but when he required the loss of their right eyes, as a condition of their peace, they rather chose to hazard their lives in an unequal war; as if servitude and death were a less mischief than one eye's loss; how much more of both? For tho' one eye be but *testis singularis*, a single witness, yet the evidence of that is as true as that of both; yea, in some cases more: for when we would take a perfect aim we shut one eye, as rather an hinderance to an accurate information; yet, for ordinary use, so do we esteem each of these lights, that there is no wise man but would rather lose a limb than an eye. Although I could tell thee of a certain man, not less religious than cheerful, who when his friends bewailed the loss of one of his eyes, asked them, "Whether they wept for the eye which he had lost or the eye which remained? weep rather, said he, for the enemy which stays behind than for the enemy that is gone." Lo, this man looked upon his eyes differently from other men; he saw them as enemies, which others see as officious servants, as good friends, as dear favourites;

vourites: indeed, they are any or all of these according as they are used; good servants, if they go faithfully on the errands we send them, and return us true intelligence; good friends, if they advise and invite us to holy thoughts; enemies, if they suggest and allure us to evil. If thine eyes have been employed in these evil offices to thy soul, God hath done that for thee, which he hath, in a figurative sense, enjoined thee to do to thyself; *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

Thou hast lost thine eyes, and together with them much earthly contentment; but withal, thou art hereby freed from many temptations. Those eyes were the inlets of sin, yea, not only the mere passages by which it entered, but busy agents in the admission of it, the very pandars of lust for the debauching of the soul. How many thousands are there, who, on their death-beds, upon the sad recalling of their guilty thoughts, have wished they had been born blind? so that if thou hast less joy thou shalt sin less, neither shall any vain objects call away thy thoughts from the serious meditation of spiritual things. Before, it was no otherwise with thee than the prophet *Jeremiah* reports it to have been with the Jews, *That death is come up by the windows.* So it was with *Eve*; *she saw*

*the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and thereupon took of the fruit.* So it hath been ever since with all the fruit of her womb, both in the old and latter world; *The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose*; inasmuch, as not filthy lusts only, but even adulteries take up their lodgings in the eye; there the blessed Apostle finds them, *Having eyes, saith he, full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.* While therefore thine heart walked after thine eyes, as *Job* speaks, it could do no other but *carry thee down to the chambers of death*; thou art now delivered from that danger of so deadly a misguidance.

Hath not the loss of thine eyes, withal, freed thee of a world of sorrows? The old word is, *What the eye beholds not, the heart does not regard*; hadst thou but seen what others were forced to behold, those fearful conflagrations, those piles of murdered carcases, those streams of Christian blood, those savage violences, those merciless rapines, those sacrilegious outrages, thine heart could not chuse but bleed within thee; now thou art affected with them only at a distance, as receiving them by the perfect intelligence of thine ear from the unfeeling relation of others.

Thine eyes are lost, what need thy heart to go along with them? I have known a blind man more cheerful than I could be with both

mine

mine eyes. Old *Isaac* was dark-sighted when he gave the blessing, contrary to his own intentions, to his son *Jacob*, yet it seems he lived forty years after, and could be pleased then to have good cheer made him with *wine and venison*; our life doth not lie in our eyes; *the spirit of a man is that which upholds his infirmities*: labour to raise that to a thankful disposition, and even in thy bodily darkness, *there shall be light and joy to thy soul*.

Hath God taken away thine eyes? but hath he not given thee an abundant supply in other faculties? are not thine inward senses the more quick, thy memory stronger, thy imagination more active, thy understanding more apprehensive? The wonders that we have heard and read of blind mens memories were not easy to believe, if it were not obvious to conceive, that the removal of all distractions gives them an opportunity both of a careful reposition of all desired objects, and of a sure fixedness on them where they are laid: hence have we seen it come to pass, that some blind men have attained to those perfections which their eyes could never have possessed them of. It is very memorable which our ecclesiastical story reports of *Didymus of Alexandria*, who, being blind from his infancy, through his prayers and diligent endeavours, reached unto such an high pitch of knowledge in logic, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, as was admired by the learned master

of those arts; and for his rare insight into divinity, was, by *Athanasius*, approved to be the doctor of the chair in that famous church. As for the other outward senses, they are commonly more exquisite in the blind: we read of some who have been of so accurate a touch, that, by their very feeling, they could distinguish betwixt black and white; and for the ear, our philosopher observes\*, that as sounds are sweeter to the blind than to the sighted; so also are they more curiously judged of by them; the virtue of both those senses being now contracted into one. But the most perfect recompence of these bodily eyes is in the exaltation of our spiritual, so much more enlightened towards the beatifical vision of God, as they apprehend more darkness in all earthly objects. Certainly, thou shalt not miss these material eyes, if thou mayest find thy soul thus happily enlightened.

Thine eyes are lost; it is a blessing that once thou hadst them: hadst thou been born blind, what a stranger hadst thou, in all likelihood, been to God and the world? Hadst thou not once seen the face of this heaven, and this earth, and this sea, what expressions could have made thee sufficiently apprehensive of the wonderful works of thy Creator; what discourse could have made thee to understand what light is? what the sun the fountain

\* The Lord *Verulam*, Sir *Francis Bacon* in his *Natural History*.

fountain of it, what the heavens the glorious region of it, and what the moon and stars illuminated by it? How couldst thou have had thy thoughts raised so high, as to give glory to that great God whose infinite power hath wrought all these marvellous things? No doubt God hath his own ways of mercy, even for those that are born dark, not requiring what he hath not given, graciously supplying, by his Spirit, what is wanting in the outward man; so as even those that could never see the face of the world, shall see the face of the God that made it. But, in an ordinary course of proceeding, those which have been blind from their birth, must needs want those helps of knowing and glorifying God, in his mighty works, which lie open to the seeing; these once filled thine eyes, and stay with thee still after thine eyes have forsaken thee: what shouldst thou do but walk on in the strength of those fixed thoughts, and be always adoring the Majesty of the God whom that sight hath represented unto thee so glorious; and, in an humble submission to his good pleasure, strive against all the discomforts of thy sufferings. Our story tells us of a valiant foldier, answerable to the name he bore, *Polyzeius*, who, after his eyes were struck out in the battle, covering his face with his target, fought still, saying about him as vehemently as if he had seen whom to smite. So do thou, my son, with no less courage;

let not the loss of thine eyes hinder thee from a cheerful resistance of those spiritual enemies, which labour to draw thee into an impatient murmuring against the hand of thy God: wait humbly upon that God who hath better eyes in store for thee, than those which thou hast lost.

Thou hast lost thy *Hearing*; it is not easy to determine which loss is the greater, of the eye or of the ear; both are grievous. Now all the world is to thee as dumb since thou art deaf to it; how small a matter hath made thee a mere cypher amongst men! These two are the senses of instruction; there is no way for intelligence to be conveyed to the soul, whether in secular or in spiritual affairs. The eye is the window, the ear is the door by which all knowledge enters; in matters of observation by the eye, in matters of *faith* by the *ear*. Had it pleased God to shut up both these senses, from thy birth, thy estate had been utterly disconsolate, neither had there been any possible access for comfort to thy soul; and if he had so done to thee in thy riper age, there had been no way for thee but to live on thy former store: but now, that he hath vouchsafed to leave thee one passage open, it behoves thee to supply the one sense by the other, and to let in those helps by the window which are denied entrance at the door. And since that Infinite Goodness hath been  
pleas'd



pleas'd to lend thee thine ear so long, as till thou hast laid the sure grounds of faith in thy heart; now thou mayest work upon them, in this silent opportunity, with heavenly meditations, and raise them up to no less height than thou mightest have done by the help of the quickest ear.

It is well for thee, that, in the fulness of thy senses, thou wert careful to improve thy bosom as a magazine of heavenly thoughts, providing; with the wise patriarch, for the seven years of dearth; otherwise, now that the passages are thus blocked up, thou couldst not but have been in danger of famishing. Thou hast now abundant leisure to recal and ruminate upon those holy counsels, which thy better times laid up in thy heart, and, to thy happy advantage, findest the difference betwixt a wise Providence and a careless neglect.

Thine outward hearing is gone; but thou hast an inward and better ear, whereby thou hearest the secret motions of God's Spirit which shall never be lost. How many thousands, whom thou enviest, are in a worse condition? they have an outward and bodily ear; whereby they hear the voice of men, but they want that spiritual ear which perceives the least whisperings of the Holy Ghost; ears they have, but not hearing ears; for fashion more than use. *Solomon* makes and observes the distinction, *The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them; and*

a greater than *Solomon* can say of his formal auditors, *Hearing they hear not*. If thou have an ear for God, though deaf to men, how much happier art thou than those millions of men that have an ear for men and are deaf to God?

Thou hast lost thy hearing, and therewith no small deal of sorrow; how would it grieve thy soul to hear those woful ejaculations, those pitiful complaints, those hideous blasphemies, those mad paradoxes, those hellish heresies wherewith thine ear would have been wounded, if it had not been barred against their entrance? it is thy just grief that thou missest of the hearing of many good words; it is thy happiness that thou art freed from the hearing of many evil. It is an even chance betwixt the benefit of hearing good, and the torment of hearing evil.

## S E C T. X.

*Consolations under the Want of CHILDREN.*

WE come next to comfort those who complain of the want of children, of a beloved offspring denied to them.

Consider then, your case is not singular; a better man before you, even the father of the faithful, made the same complaint; *What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* so did the wife  
of

of faithful *Israel*, *Give me children or I die*. So desirous hath nature been, even in the holiest, to propagate itself, and so impatient of a denial; *Lo, children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift that cometh from the Lord. Happy is he that hath his quiver full of such shafts.* It is the blessing that *David* grudged to wicked ones, *They have children at their desire*. It was the curse which God inflicted upon the family of *Abimelech* king of *Gerar*, *That he closed up all the wombs in his house for Sarah's sake*; and the judgment threatened to *Ephraim*, is, *a miscarrying womb and dry breasts*; and *Jehonah's* sad doom is, *Write this man childless*: as, on the contrary, it is a special favour of God, *that the barren hath borne seven*; and it is noted by the Psalmist, as a wonder of God's mercy, *That he maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children*. It is pity he was ever born, that holds not children a blessing; yet not simple and absolute, but according as it may prove, She hath a double favour from God who is a joyful mother of children; many a one breeds her sorrow, breeds her death. There is scarce any other blessing from God seasoned with so much acrimony both of misery and danger. Do but lay together the sick fits of breeding, the painful throws of travel, the weary attendances of nursing, the anxious cares of education, the fears and doubts of misguidance, the perpetual solicitude for their provision, the

heart-breaking grief for their miscarriage, and tell me whether thy bemoaned sterility have not more ease, less sorrow.

But, it is thy sorrow that thou art not fruitful; consider that thou art herein freed from a greater sorrow; *In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.* Do but think upon the shrieks and torments that thou hast seen and heard in the painful travels of thy neighbours; one thou hast seen wearying the days and nights in restless pangs, and calling for death in a despair of delivery; one hath her dead burden torn from her by piece-meal, another is delivered of her life and birth together; one languisheth to death after the hand of an unskilful midwife, another is weary of her life through the soreness of her breasts; all these sorrows thou hast escaped by this one; in these regards, how many whom thou enviest have thought thee happier than themselves?

Thou art afflicted that thou art not a mother; many a one is so, that wishes she had been barren, if either the child prove deformed and misshapen, or, upon further growth, unnatural and wicked; what a corrosive is this to her that bore him? *Rebecca* thought it long to be, after her marriage, twenty years childless; her holy husband, at sixty years of age, prays to God for issue by her; his devotion, as the Jewish doctors say, carried him to Mount *Moriah* for this purpose, that in the same place where his life

was

was miraculously preserved from the knife of his father, it might, by the like miracle, be renewed in his posterity. God hears him; *Rebecca* conceives; but when she felt that early combat of her struggling twins in her womb, she can say, *If it be so, why am I thus?* And when she saw a child come forth, all clad in hair, and after saw his conditions no less rough than his hide, do we not think she wished that part of her burden unborn? Certainly children are, according to their proof, either blessings or crosses. Hast thou a child well-disposed, well-governed? *A wise son maketh a glad father:* Hast thou a child disorderly and debauched? *A foolish son is the heaviness of his mother; and the calamity of his father:* hast thou a son that is unruly, stubborn, unnatural? *He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame and bringeth reproach.* And if such a son should live and die impenitent, what can be answerable to the discomfort of that parent who shall think that a part of himself is in hell.

Thou hast no children; as thou hast less joy, so thou hast less trouble; it is an immense deal of work and thoughts that belong to these living possessions. *Artemidorus* observes, that to dream of children imports cares to follow: Surely, as they are our greatest cares, so they bring many lesser cares with them; before thou hadst but one mouth to feed, now many. And upon whom doth this charge

lay, but upon the parent? not nature only, but religion casts it upon him; For if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel. Dost thou not see that many suckers, growing up from the root of the tree, draw away the sap from the stock? and many rivulets, let out from the main channel, leave the stream shallow? So it must be with thee and thine; but this expence is not more necessary than comfortable.

I remember a great man, coming to my house at *Waltham*\*, and seeing all my children standing in the order of their age and stature, said, These are they that make rich men poor; but he straight received this answer; Nay, my Lord, these are they that make a poor man rich, for there is not one of these whom we would part with for all your wealth." Indeed, wherefore do we receive but to distribute? and what are we but the farmers of those we leave behind us? and, if we do freely lay out our substance beforehand for their good, so much of our rent is happily cleared. It is easy to observe, that none are so griping and hard-fisted as the childless; whereas those who, for the maintenance of large families, are inured to frequent disbursements, find such experience of divine Providence in the faithful managing of their affairs, as that they lay out with more cheerfulness than they receive; wherein their  
care

\* *Bishop Hall's.*

care must be abated, when God takes it off from them to himself: and, if they be not wanting to themselves, their faith gives them ease, in casting their burden upon him who hath both more power and more right to it, since our children are more his than our own. He that feedeth the *young ravens*, can he fail the best of his creatures?

*Greenham* tells us of a gentlewoman, who, coming into the cottage of a poor neighbour, and seeing it furnished with store of children, could say, Here are the mouths, but where is the meat? but not long after she was paid in her own coin, for the poor woman coming to her after the burial of her last, and now only child; inverted the question upon her, "Here is the meat, but where are the mouths?" Surely, the great House-keeper of the world, whose charge we are, will never leave any of his menials without the bread of sufficiency; and who are so fit to be his purveyors as the parents for their own brood? Nature hath taught the very birds to pick out the best of the grains for their young? Nature sends that moisture out of the root which gives life to the branches and blossoms. Sometimes it meets with a kind retaliation; some \* stork-like disposition repays the loving offices done by the parents in a dutiful retribution to their age or necessity; but how often have we seen the contrary? Here, an insatiable importunity  
of

\* See *Christian's Magazine*, vol. iii. p. 63.

of drawing from the parent that maintenance which is but necessary for his own subsistence: there an undutiful and unnatural neglect, whether in not owning the meanness of those that begot them; or in not supporting the weakness of their decayed estate by due maintenance. Ingratitude is odious in any man, but in a child monstrous\*.

It is thy grief that thou never hadst a child; believe him who hath tried it, there is not so much comfort in the having of children, as there is sorrow in parting with them, especially, when they are come to their proof; when their parts and disposition have raised our hopes of them, and doubled our affection towards them. And as, according to the *French* proverb, he that hath not, cannot lose; so contrarily, he that hath, must lose; our meeting is not more certain than our parting; either we must leave them, and so their grief for us must double ours; or they must leave us, and so our grief for them must be no less than our love was of them. If then thou wilt be truly wise, set thy heart upon that only absolute good which is not capable of losing: divided affections must needs abate of their force; now since there are no objects of darkness which might distract thy love, be sure to place it wholly upon that Infinite Goodness which shall entertain it with mercy, and reward it with

\* My young readers are here referred to a sermon, call'd, "Youth dissuaded from vice."



with blessedness. If *Elkanah* therefore could say to his barren wife *Hannah*, *Why weepest thou? and why is thy heart heavy? am not I better to thee than ten sons?* How much more comfortably mayest thou hear the Father of mercies say to thy soul, *Why is thy heart heavy? am not I better to thee than ten thousand sons?*

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S E C T. XI.

*Consolations under the Inconveniencies of OLD AGE.*

OLD Age is that which we all desire to aspire unto; and when we have attained, are as ready to complain of as our greatest misery; verifying, in part, that old observation, That wedlock and age are things which we desire and repent of. Is this our ingratitude or inconstancy, that we are weary of what we wished? perhaps this accusation may not be universal; there is much difference in constitutions, and much latitude in old age; infancy and youth have their limits, age admits of no certain determination: at seventy years *David* was old and stricken in years, and they covered him with cloaths, but he gat no heat; whereas *Caleb* can profess, *Now lo, I am fourscore and five years old; as yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me to spy out the land: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, both to go out and come in.* And, beyond him, *Moses*

*ses was an hundred and twenty years old, when his eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated. Methuselah was but old when he was nine hundred sixty-five. But as for the generality of mankind, the same Moses, who lived to see an hundred and twenty years, hath set man's ordinary period at half his own term; The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if, by reason' of strength, they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: lo, fourscore years alone are load enough for the strength, much more for the weakness, of age; but when labour and sorrow are added to the weight, how can we but double under the burthen? He was both old and wise, that said out of experience, "That our last days are the dregs of our life; the clearer part is gone, and all drawn out, the lees sink down to the bottom." Who can express the miserable inconveniencies that attend old age! wherein our cares must needs be multiplied according to the manifold occasions of our affairs: for the world is a net, wherein the more we stir, the more we are entangled. And, for our bodily grievances, what varieties do we here meet withal? As age is no other than the common sewer into which all diseases of our life are wont to empty themselves. Well therefore might Sarah say, *After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure?* And good Barzillus justly excuses himself for not accepting the gracious invitation of *David*;*

*vid; I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Lo, these are they which the preacher calls the evil days, and the years wherein a man shall say, I have no pleasure; wherein the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain: when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened\*.* Shortly, what is our old age but the winter of our life? how can we then expect any other than gloomy weather, chilling frosts, storms and tempests.

But while we do thus querulously aggravate the incommodities of age, we must beware lest we derogate from the bounty of our Maker, and disparage those blessings which he accounts precious, amongst which old age is none of the meanest: had he not put that value upon it, would he have honoured it with his own stile, calling himself, *The Ancient of days?* Would he else have proposed this mercy as a reward of obedience to himself, *I will fulfil the number of thy days,* and of obedience to our parents, *To live long in the land?* Would he

\* For an excellent comment, on this picture of old age, see *Christian's Magazine*, vol. ii. p. 175.

he have promised it as a marvellous favour to restore *Jerusalem*, now become a city of truth; so that *there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem; and every man with his staff in his hand for very age?* Would he else have denounced it as a judgment to over-indulgent *Eli*, *There shall not be an old man in thine house for ever?* Far be it from us to despise that which God doth honour, and to turn his blessing into a curse. Yea, the same God who knows best the price of his own favours, as he makes no small estimation of age himself, so he hath thought fit to call for an high respect to be given to it by himself, out of an holy awe to himself; *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God. I am the Lord.* Hence it is that he hath pleased to put together *the Ancient and the Honourable*; and hath told us, *That an hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in a way of righteousness:* and lastly, he makes it an argument of the deplored estate of *Jerusalem*, that they favoured not the elders. As therefore we too sensibly feel what to complain of, so we well know what privileges we may challenge as due to our age; even such as nature itself hath taught those heathens which have been, in the next degree, to savage: if pride and skill have made the *Athenians* uncivil, yet a young *Lacedaemonian* will rise up, and yield his place in the theatre to neglected age.

It is not a little injurious so to fasten our eyes upon the discommodities of any condition, as not to take in the advantages that belong to it, which, carefully laid together, may perhaps sway the balance to an equal poise. Let it be true, that old age is oppressed with many bodily griefs; but what if it yield other immunities which may keep the scales even? whereof it is not the least, that it gives us firm resolution, and bold security against dangers and death itself; for the old man knows how little of his clew is left in the winding, and therefore, when just occasion is offered, sticks not so much upon so inconsiderable a remainder. Old age and orbity, as *Cesellius* professed, were those two things that emboldened him. And when *Castritius* refused to deliver the hostages of *Placentia* to *Carbo* the consul, and was threatened with many swords, he answered those menaces with his many years. And that we may not disdain home-bred instances, and may see that brave spirits may lodge in cottages: In my time a plain villager in the *Rude Peak*, when thieves, taking advantage of the absence of his family, breaking into his solitary dwelling, and finding him sitting alone by his fire-side, fell violently upon him; and one of them setting his dagger to his heart, swore that he would presently kill him, if he did not instantly deliver to them that money, which they knew he had lately received; the old  
man

man looks boldly in the face of that stout villain, and, with an undaunted courage, returns him this answer, “Nay, son, kill me if thou wilt, I have lived long enough; but I tell thee, unless thou mend thy manners, thou wilt never live to see half my days.” What young man would have been so easily induced to part with his life, and have been so ready to give entertainment to an unexpected death? Surely, the hope and love of life commonly softens the spirits of vigorous youth, and dissuades it from those enterprises which are attended with manifest peril; whereas extreme age teacheth us to contemn dangers.

Yet a greater priviledge of age is a freedom from those impetuous passions wherewith youth is commonly overfwayed; for altogether, with our natural heat, is also abated the heat of our inordinate lusts, so as now our weaker appetite may easily be subdued to reason: The temperate old man, in the story, when one shewed him a beautiful face, could answer, I have long since ceased to be eye-sick. And another could say, of pleasure, I have gladly withdrawn myself from the service of that imperious mistress. What an unreasonable vassalage our youthful lusts subject us unto, we need no other instance than in the strongest and wisest man; how was *Sampson* effeminated by his impotent passion, and weakened in his intellectuals so far, as wilfully to betray his own life to a mercenary harlot,  
and

and to endure to hear her say, *Tell me wherewith thou mayest be bound to do thee hurt*: how easily might he have answered thee, “O *Delila*, even with those cords of brutish sensuality wherewith thou hast already bound me to the loss of my liberty, mine eyes, my life.” How was *Solomon* besotted with his strange wives, so as to be drawn away to the worship of strange gods! and how may the fir-trees howl, when the cedars fall! who can hope to be free from being transported with irregular affections, when we see such great precedents of frailty before our eyes? From the danger of these miserable miscarriages, our age happily secures us, putting us into that quiet harbour whence we may see young men perilously tossed with those tempests of unruly passions, from which our cooler age hath freed us.

Add hereunto the benefit of experimental knowledge, wherewith age is wont to enrich us, every dram whereof is worth many pounds of the best youthly contentments; in comparison whereof speculative knowledge is weak and imperfect; this may come cheap, perhaps cost us nothing; that commonly we pay dear for, and therefore it is justly esteemed the more precious: If experience be the mistress of fools, I am sure it is the mother of wisdom; neither can it be, except we be much wanting to ourselves, but the long observation of such variety of actions

and events, as meet with us in the whole course of our life, must needs leave with us such sure rules of judgment, as may be un-failing directions for ourselves and others: In vain shall this be expected from our younger years, which the wise philosopher excludes from being meet auditors, much less judges of true morality; in regard whereof, well might the old man say, “Ye young men think us old men fools, but we old men know you young men to be fools.” Certainly, what value soever ignorance may put upon it, this fruit of age is such, as that the earth hath nothing equally precious. It was a profane word, and fit for the mouth of an heathen poet, “That prudence is above destiny;” but surely a Christian may modestly and justly say, That, next to divine Providence, human prudence may challenge the supreme place in the administration of these earthly affairs; and that age may claim the greatest interest in that prudence: Young *Elihu* could say, *Multitude of years should teach wisdom: And the wise man, O how comely a thing is judgment for gray hairs, and for ancient men to know counsel! O how comely is the wisdom of old men, and understanding and counsel to men of honour!* In regard whereof the *Grecians* were wont to say, “That young men are for action, old men for advice;” and among the *Romans* we know that the senators take their name from age. That therefore which is the  
weakness



weakness of old mens eyes, that they better discern things further off, (their visual spirits not uniting till some distance) is the praise and strength of their mental eyes; they see either judgments or advantages afar off, and accordingly frame their determinations. It is observed that old lutes sound better than new; and it was *Rehoboam's* folly and undoing, that he would rather follow the counsel of his green heads that stood before him, than of those grave senators that stood before his wiser father. Not that mere age is of itself thus rich in wisdom and knowledge, but age well cultured, well improved: There are old men that do but live, or rather have a being upon earth, (so have stocks and stones as well as they) who can have no proof of their many years but their gray hairs and infirmities. There are those, who, like *Hermogenes*, are old men while they are boys, and children when they are old men: these the elder they grow are so much more stupid. Time is an ill measure of age, which should rather be meted by proficiency, by ripeness of judgment, by the monuments of our commendable and useful labours. If we have thus bestowed ourselves, our autumn will shew what our spring was; and the colour of our hair will yield us more cause to fear our pride than our dejection.

We accuse our age of many weaknesses and indispositions; but these imputations must

not be universal: Many of these are the faults of the person, not of the age. He said well, that as all wine doth not turn four with age, no more doth every nature. Old oil is noted to be clearer and hotter in a medicinal use than new. There are those who are pettish and crabbed in youth; there are contrarily those who are mild, gentle, sociable in their decayed years; there are those who are crazy in their prime, and there are those who in their wane are vigorous; there are those who, ere the fulness of their age, have lost their memory; there are those whose intellectuals have so happily held out, that they have been best at the last: *Plato*, in his last year, which was fourscore and one, died, as it were, with his pen in his hand: *Isocrates* wrote his best piece at ninety-four years; and, it is said of *Demosthenes*, that when death summoned him at an hundred years, and somewhat more, he bemoaned himself that he must now die when he began to get some knowledge. And, as for spiritual graces and improvements, *Such as be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God: they also shall bring forth more fruit in their age, and shall be fat and well-liking.*

But the chief benefit of our age is, our near approach to our journey's end; for the end of all motion is rest; which when we have once attained, there remains nothing but fruition: Now our age brings us, after a weary  
 race,

race, within some breathings of our goal; for, if young men die, old men must. A condition which a mere carnal heart bewails and abhors, complaining of nature as niggardly in her dispensations of the shortest time to her noblest creature, and envying the oaks, which many generations of men must leave standing and growing. No marvel; for the worldling thinks himself here at home, and looks upon death as a banishment: he hath placed his heaven here below, and can see nothing, in his remove, but either annihilation or torment. But for us Christians, who know, that while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord; and do justly account ourselves foreigners, our life a pilgrimage, heaven our home; how can we but rejoice, that, after a tedious and painful travel, we do now draw near to the threshold of our Father's house; wherein we know there are many mansions, and all glorious. I could blush to hear an heathen say, "If God would offer me the choice of renewing my age, and returning to my first childhood, I should heartily refuse it; for I should be loth, after I have passed so much of my race, to be called back from the goal to the bars of my first setting out:" and to hear a Christian whining and pining at the thought of his dissolution. Where is our faith of an haven, if, having been so long sea-beaten, we are loth to think of putting into the safe and blessed harbour of immortality?"

We conclude these Consolations with Dr. Young's Thoughts for Age\*:

“On the brink of that state we, *now*, stand: that post of wisdom, if ever men are wise: which is the reason why they wish it may be long before they arrive at it: for folly is the favourite of mankind: and is it not our own? Though there we stand, we scarce believe it; so much our wishes obstruct our belief: or, believing, scarce know what being *there* means; so much familiarity takes away our attention; and robs things of their power to strike strong on our minds. *Eternity* has so often passed our lips, that it has forgot its way to our hearts. Did it enter there, would it not extinguish every earth-born passion in it? Yes; as the sun, the smallest spark of fire.

Though we stand on its awful brink, such our leaden bias to the world, we turn our faces the wrong way; we are still looking on our old acquaintance, *Time*; though, *now*, so wasted and reduced, that we can see little more of him than his *wings* and his *scythe*: our age enlarges his wings to our imagination; and our fear of death, his scythe; as *time* himself grows less. His consumption is deep: his annihilation is at hand.

Should we not then turn us round, and look on eternity? that glorious home of all that survives, and outshines the sun; that  
kingdom

\* See *Centaur*, p. 266.

kingdom of souls immortal! of immortal souls, *time* is only the maturing womb; from eternity they wait their *real* birth. Are we, my friend! matured? or shall we prove abortive to the world of glory? if we were mature, why tarry here so long? by protracting life, heaven shews not its favour to those that are fit to die. Is not the business of our day undone the cause why we are suffered to sit up so late? to be so long on our weary legs, after the common hour of human rest? I fear it is. I much fear we are permitted to live, purely because—we do not deserve it.

Is it not, (my languid fellow-traveller in the deep vale of years!) high time to be wiser? lest the greatest of curses should fall on us, that of being wise too late: which is the most emphatical definition of a fool. The world is worn out to us; and we are worn out to the world. The world, which knows its own interest, quits us, as rats a ruined house; if we knew ours, should we not quit the world, as bees an exhausted flower? We can make no more honey of it; its sweets are gone. Where are its formerly sweet delusions, its airy castles, and glittering spires? Are we not left on a loney, barren, briery heath, to grope out our weary way, through the dusk of life, to our final home? Shall not the dissolved enchantment set the captive free? Are we *Torrijsmond's* or *Sudbury's*? Shall our dotage rivet our chains,

when kind nature would knock them off? To speak a language even Centaurs may understand, "A last card, well played, may yet win the game."

Consider; are we scheming still? stretching out a trembling hand, which wants to be supported, to grasp at the nothing that comes next? Any thing now gained would rather mock, than enrich us; can any thing enrich, that cannot be enjoyed? Grasp at new *faculties*, and new *powers*, if thou canst find them, or new objects will only laugh us to scorn. But hadst thou even *those*, if the value of things is in proportion to our term in them, their price at our market should fall very low.

It is a good thing to know when we have *all*, and to laugh at that cheat *more*, which is ever stealing our hearts. But it is as uncommon, as good. Hence, seniors are milking the world after it is dry. Is it not a shame that we should be gleaning sublunary *straws*, when our harvest of life is over? hoping an after-crop in our stubble? Though called to diadems, where harvest is perpetual; where an harvest, more than golden, profusely crowns an eternal year?

As to the pass which is so much feared; the dark, subterranean entry to future life; into which our weak imagination peeps, and starts back, as a child at a shadow; all thanks to the blessed Gospel, we know what will light us up a lamp in it, and lessen its formidable

dable gloom. I have seen a death-bed, the reverse of poor *Altamont's*\*, where the bystanders were the greatest sufferers; and the king of terrors, by Christian patience, was over-matched. The power of religion shone out without a veil; nor could any rising suspicions of hypocrisy dim its lustre. In such scenes as these the human heart is no longer invisible to man; and a glimpse of heaven is discovered in such a sight.

We know what can make us sleep sweetly in the dust: what can smooth the rough transition; soften death into a sort of translation, which interrupts not (blessed be God!) our existence; nor our peace. In peace have many died; and, therefore, it is certain, all *may*. The whole secret for obtaining that peace is an absolute resignation to the Most High; which (as hard a task as it seems to some) at the bottom is no more than owning him to be God. And a contrary conduct (as little as it is considered) has atheism, partial atheism, in it. It is questioning some of his attributes, though not denying a God. May that peace be thine! My heart beats with ardour for thy present peace, and future bliss. May I share it with thee! What a poor broken embrace, what a sad fragment of friendship, is that which ends at the grave? Such a transitory tie gives a second dart to death; and a double dissolution to departing man. That of soul and body scarce more severe.

Would

\* See *Centaur*, p. 155.

Would to Heaven! that all friendships were, *evidently*, friendships of immortal men. Such, I mean, as gave proof of their having each others *eternal* interests at heart. Modern, at least, fashionable friendship flows from a polluted source; it tastes too strong of earth; without the least tincture of man (as above described;) without the least spirit of *immortality* in it. Nay, worse; it often springs from causes that will not bear the light; and resembles the dark streams of *Alpheus*, and *Arethusa*, that mingle under ground: it should rather resemble *Eridanus*, which is said to flow from heaven.

How many have we of these subterranean attachments? What is it ties our Centaurs together in so long a *string*?—Leaping together the same barriers of the decent, and the just; ranging the same forbidden grounds; gorging at the same manger; neighing the same inflammatory tune; or being daily rid, and sorely galled, by the domineering insolence of the same inflamed mistress.

Since such their accomplishments, I hope to levy a *Lapithean* infantry sufficient successfully to carry on the war now opened against them.—As *Chiron* blew the trumpet which called the *Greeks* to the siege of *Troy*; I hear there is a modern *Chiron*, who sounds as many instruments, as *Nebuchadnezar* did to summon his idolaters; and that he raises forces, and ceases not to carry on the war at a *vast expence*.



*pence.* Doubtless he was typified of old by him who is said in *Virgil*;

*Ære ciere viros, martemque accendere cantu.*

For my own part, my friend! I fancy my campaign will soon be over. I have frequent pains. and, I think, I hear the Master call. If so, should we not leave this world, though not yet admitted of the next? Have we not been, through life, anxiously providing one year for the next? and shall we grudge to pay half that pains for an eternity?

Consider, my *immortal* friend! should we not leave the world, before the world leaves us? it is dismal to be left. There is a noble absence from earth, while we are yet on it: and there is a nobler intimacy with heaven, while we are yet beneath it. If our affection flies thither, we shall be welcomed by superior Beings, and not be missed by men, who delight in novelties; or, if missed, admired the more for being *once* in the right. They must be somewhat out of this world, who would be deep in the concerns of the next: and is it not time we should be so? Till the business of life (as it is called) is over, its real business is rarely begun: nor always then. Age is apt to carry its allowed title to repose too far: age is the most busy period of human life. But its transactions are not with men. Therefore that absence above mentioned is most fit for us. It is a sort of third

state

state between this world and the next. How proper then for the reception of those, whose term is out, here, according to the common age of man?

And can it be hard for us to lay this world aside, since they that have fared best in the world, have only the fewest objections against it. Is it not an old tragi-comedy read over and over, which by no means,

— *Decies repetita placebit?* Juv.

To speak in the licentious style of comedy, man is a mule, of mixed origin, of heaven and earth: earth has had more than its share of us; give heaven the rest: and that for a *double* reason. All know that hope is life's cordial: it works miracles; without happiness it makes men happy. What have been all the pleasures of our former years, but joyous prophecies, and bold promises in the name of to-morrow? *Worldly hope* in age expires. If he provides not another hope, a man of years, and a man of misery, mean the same thing. Therefore the same steps are to be taken whether we would sweeten the remaining dreg of life, or provide a triumph for eternity.

The worldly wishes, which an old man sends out, are like *Noah's* dove; they cannot find whereon to light, and must return to his own heart again for rest. His natural, and, perhaps, most allowable and proper wish is  
for

for respect. But respect for age is a *virtue*. I need say no more to convince him how little of it he must expect: and, indeed, he but ill deserves it from others, who, by doating on the world, denies it to himself.

When infirmity drives the world from us, or disease confines us to our chamber, shall we not be all alone with the great Father of spirits, and Searcher of hearts? Is it not worth while a little beforehand to practise our lesson, that we may be the better prepared to sustain such an interview? Our wisdom cannot add to the days, but it can lighten the burden of life; and lessen the terrors of death. Death forgot in youth is folly; in age, madness. With regard to that king of terrors, how many in years *borrow* the security of youth; for it is impossible it should belong to them. Happy they! whom death, when he comes, shall find at home; his visit will have less of terror in it. Out of pure decency to the dignity of human nature, of which the decays and imperfections should not be exposed, men in years, by recess, should sling a veil over them, and to the world be a little buried, before they are interred. An old man's too great familiarity with the public is an indignity to the human nature, and a neglect of the Divine. A greater intercourse with it than the calls of duty and virtue demand, is indecent, irreligious, and contemptible; speaking acquiescence in contempt,  
dotage

dotage on the world, and oblivion of eternity. His fancying himself to be still properly one of this world, and on a common foot with the rest of mankind, is, as if a man getting drunk in the morning, after a long nap, lifting his drowsy lids at sunset, should take it for break of day.

But grant him to be still of this world; grant him all it can give; what is this world, but a machine played on us by our *great enemy* for the dissipation of human thought, whose scattered rays must be collected, as it were, to a focal point, in order duly to warm our devotion, and set a pious heart on fire? And can any happiness subsist in age without piety? Impossible! its intimacy with the world, is not for the pleasures it can give; they are past; it is purely to dislodge the thoughts of death, which intrude at that season; that is, it is purely to decline the pleasures of heaven.

Why, my friend! is our day of trial extended beyond the expiration of the common term? Is it not indulged to the great need our past conduct has of it? and shall our folly reverse the kind intention of that Divine indulgence to us? Shall it set us farther from our God? I am never so strongly struck with the weakness and depravity of man, as when I see grey hairs playing the fool. Hope, which in other evil appearances supports our spirits, fails us there. What can shock common sense, what can create amazement, if not the failings

failings that would dishonour youth, in those that are miraculously alive after the stated period of human life? This is an outrage to reason beyond the boldness of the desperado that confounds us most: this outdares the felon repeating his crime, not only under the gallows, but with the cord about his neck. Where is that world into which you and I were born? It is under-ground; and a generation of strangers are dancing over our coevals long since in the dust. Where is that world into which we shall be born? Far, far above the sun, if, while we *are* beneath it, we behave ourselves like men. But if this life was our only concern, consider, that nothing but being wiser, that is better than those born after us, can possibly rescue the decays of age from aversion and contempt.

Fain would I have my pen of some service to the aged, now my nearest relations, those of blood are no more. To the former am I related by like date, duty, interest, concern, and above all

— *Nunc ipsa pericula jungunt.* Ov.

Now dangers themselves unite.

Still eager in worldly pursuits, warm in the chace of shadows, shall we rush, as down a precipice, and leap plumb into the jaws of extempore death?

No, let us halt in our career; pause on the brink; and provide for our eternal peace.

Can

Can I better express my love than by pressing it on thee? I press it strongly. And know, my friend! that heaven, and (as I have shewed thee) a most indulgent Heaven, joins my pathetic wish; and angels, ardent angels, say Amen. And what want they? (mark it well,) they want nothing but thy own concurrence to crown their wishes for thy welfare!"

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## S E C T. XII.

*The Good* CHRISTIAN *Comforted in*  
DEATH.

DEATH being the last and greatest of evils, we propose, as drawing near the end of our Consolations, to shew what comfort the good Christian may derive from the consideration of this sure, this solemn event.

After the most awful vision of the happy state into which the Saints of God are admitted; of the miserable state to which the servants of sin are condemned, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and who have no rest day nor night;—St. *John* informs us, That he heard a solemn voice from heaven, saying unto him, *Write, note it down as a thing worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance, That blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth:—*But why

why *from henceforth*, why from that period only? were not all those who died in the Lord, blessed in all times, and from every period? Without doubt they were. What then doth this *henceforth* imply? Commentators and critics are much divided. It seems to me that the original word, *απὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς*, might more properly have been rendered, according to its exactest signification, *immediately, directly, from the instant*: and, I suppose, it is designed to inform us of a very important truth, namely, That those who die in the Lord, “enter into an *immediate* state of blessedness.” I would therefore read it: “Write, Immediately blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; or, the dead who die in the Lord are blessed immediately: yea, saith the Spirit, confirming the great truth, That they may rest from their labours; that they may enter into that state of glorious rest which God hath provided, and which remaineth for his people: and he adds, Their works do follow with them.”

So that in these words, (the signification of which is so important and consolatory, that our Church hath appointed them for perpetual use in her Burial-Service,) we are taught, that *Death*, so far from an evil, is to those who die in his faith and fear, the greatest happiness conceivable: since it immediately conveys such

from a state of trial, labour, and misery, to a state of blessedness, rest, and rewards.

And in this view I propose to consider it; not only as this view may tend to remove some of those anxious fears under which most men labour; but may reconcile us more to the approach of that dreadful conqueror, to whom we must all, one day, submit: whose approach, therefore, it is, of all things, most necessary to contemplate, since the contemplation will serve, above all things, to lead us to seriousness of thought, and holiness of life. A contemplation of universal concern, to which no reasonable being can be indifferent, as it respects all his best and dearest interests.

In this view then, we observe, that *Death*, considered in every notion of it, must be blessed to those who die in the Lord. Now, I know not of any other notions of Death than these three: 1. That it is a separation from the body; 2. That it is a departure from this world; and, 3. That it is an entrance, an admission, everlasting and unchangeable, into another world. These, it must be allowed, are very affecting and awakening views of it; such as make the children of this world shudder and look pale; but let us not be terrified, let us boldly approach and draw the ghastly veil from this universally abhorred tyrant, and we shall see him, with the eye of faith, disrobed



robed of his terrors, and cloathed with comforts \*. For,

1. Is death a separation from the body?—alas, human nature shudders at the thought! What, must this fair frame, with which we have been so long familiar, shared all its pains, shared all its pleasures, must this be inactive, and cold as the clay; must these eyes, sparkling with life, be closed in darkness and death; must this vigorous pulse no longer beat vivid and strong; these hands no longer perform their office, these feet no more bear us with pleasing activity along? But more affecting still; must this lifeless corpse be conveyed to the damp, the dark, the silent tomb, deserted and forsaken by its dearest friends, and left a sad prey to corruption and worms? Yes, all this must inevitably be. And here you behold the evil in its worse appearance. But change the view, and consider that the body is but the prison of the soul; the prison of the divine and nobler part, which once emancipated and set free, shall enter on a life of nobler pleasure; nay, and that this very body is relinquished but for a season; delivered as a precious deposit to the grave, sown as a facied seed of a new, a more lovely and uncorrupted frame, hereafter to be raised and united again by the Lord of life to the rejoicing soul:—Consider it in this view, and you will lay

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\* Those who would see more on this subject, we refer to "Reflections on Death." Printed for Newbery.

down the load of flesh without reluctance or complaint; you will put it off, as a cumbrous garment, with joy, and be pleased to reflect, that for the spotted and tattered robes of mortality, you shall speedily be clad with eternal and incorruptible robes of glory and life.

But, in truth, the good man, the sincere believer, finds little cause to regret the separation from his body; however dreadful and uneasy it may be to the sinner, and how lothsoever they may be to part with it, with whom it is the favoured instrument of their wicked gratifications. With the good man it is far otherwise; he lives in the daily mortification of those sensual lusts and appetites, to which a fallen and corruptible frame is continually prompting. He cannot, therefore, be grieved to separate from a foe, with which he is in continual war; to be set free from the body, since he is thereby set free from all temptations, to lust and to sin. And not with respect to sin only,—sickness and pain, disease and anguish, may render the good man's dissolution desirable, and remove every cause of complaint when death cuts the thread; nay, cause the stroke of death, most devoutly to be wished: "For, oh death, saith the wise son of *Sirach*, acceptable is thy sentence unto him whose strength faileth, who is now in the last age, and is disquieted with every thing!"

So that, whether we consider the body as the prison of the soul, as the great instrument of  
concupiscence

concupiscence and sin, or as the subject of diseases and pains; certain it is, that a separation from it is and must be, at once, desirable and blessed to those who die in the Lord; since thereby they are admitted into a glorious liberty, into rest, eternal rest from sin, from sorrow, and from death.

Look we then no more at chapels, at vaults, or at church-yards, the gloom of the grave, or the solemn sadness of the tomb; but raise we our eyes to the blissful deliverance of an immortal spirit from the prison of frail, corrupted, afflicting flesh, into all the freedom and all the glories of the sons of God; and we shall join with *St. John*, and say, *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.*

2. But death is not only a separation from the body, but, by necessary consequence, a *departure* from this world; this is the second notion of it; and one in which, it must be confessed, it is a formidable evil to the children of this world, to those who lay land to land, and field to field, and call the places after their own names; to those who, in the language of the wise man, crown themselves with rose-buds, who enjoy the good things that are present, who fill themselves with costly wine, and let no flower of the spring pass by; to those whose hearts and pursuits are taken up by the glories, the pleasures, the

vanities of earth ; to such, it must be owned, a departure from this life is fearfully horrible ; to leave a scene, in which is all their joy and all their hope ; to enter upon one where they can have no hope, for they have no treasure, no desire ; to die, and go they know not where ;—only this they know, that they dread a miserable something, that they have neither friend nor expectation in the realms beyond the grave.

Better indeed, far better it were to endure all the evils of this world for ever, than, in such a state, to meet the ghastly tyrant. But, alas, he must be met ! power, pomp, or pleasure, luxury, lust, ambition, all the world, and all its efforts, cannot stay his pace, or arrest his dart ; cannot even obtain one moment's respite from the inexorable king !—The good man neither wishes nor desires it ; having been long accustomed to the serious review of himself, his present state, and future expectancies ; he estimates the world according to its real value ; and therefore not setting an undue and improper price upon it, he is ready to leave it at the great Master's call. Himself he is taught to consider as a stranger, as a pilgrim and sojourner, as a probationer on earth, for an everlasting and unalterable state. Keeping his eye therefore on that, the present transitory span appears but as an *inn*, a place of temporary stay, which demands neither great hopes nor great fears ;  
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and in which he is concerned only to conduct himself wisely and religiously, assured, that, in such a case, the event will shortly be blessed.

And when the awful summons comes to such a man, found, as he is, with his loins girt, and his lamp ready trimmed and burning, he obeys the Master's call with cheerfulness and peace; resigns the body and the world with equal faith, and hastes to enter, good and faithful servant, into the joy of his Lord.

A departure from the world cannot but be blessed to such a one; for consider only, one moment, what he gains for what he foregoes, and you will soon perceive his happy lot. *Blissed are the dead, saith St. John, who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours;* and what a gain is that to poor mortals like us, tost as we are, upon the storms and billows of tempestuous life, and exercised according to our different states with different labours and toils, perplexities, difficulties, and evils. For no condition in life is exempt from these; the crown of the monarch has its thorns; the down of the noble will not always invite the softness of slumber and the placidness of health, no more than the pallet of the peasant, or the cottage of the laborious hind. All states in life have their sufferings; to rest therefore, ever to rest from these, is one great gain of those who die in Christ. Do such forego a plentiful fortune and a large estate? they gain,—

and there is no comparison in the gain,—a crown of glory, and an inheritance among the saints of God. What then is the gain to those who leave only poverty and distress for riches and peace, temporal want for eternal wealth? Do they forego dear and beloved relations, the affectionate wife, or the tender husband, the much-loved children, and the friends, dear as their own souls?—Here it must be owned is the bitterness of death; to part with these indeed is dying! yet, let me be pardoned, if the softness of humanity hath led me to say too much: they do not part: the Christian leaves them only for a while, in full and assured faith to meet, to meet again to part no more; leaves them with perfect resignation in the hands of a good and gracious Providence; leaves them in hope: and, oh, may those, who so leave their heart's best attachments, oh, may such not be disappointed of that pleasing hope!

But let me observe, that here too, in this particular, which looks most like a loss of any other, the believer hath infinite gain; for, instead of mortal, he gains immortal friends; he is admitted into the kingdom, and to the sight of God and of Christ, to the happy communion of all the blessed; to that realm where every inhabitant is a friend each to the other; for each is the friend of God and the servant of Christ, and where such are, true friendship and harmony, the soul of concord, and the

the riches of love; must reign for ever and ever.

Thus then death, considered in this second notion of it, as a departure from this present transitory world, is so far from an evil to those who die in the Lord, that it is a singular blessing and the greatest gain: though it must be allowed the most terrible of all terrible things to the lover of this world, to the servants of sin and of sense; to those whose lives are earthly, sensual, devilish; and whose end must therefore be hopeless, helpless, horrible.

3. But there is one notion more of death, in which we are to consider it; namely, as it is an entrance and mission into another world, into a state unalterable and ever-during; into a state, where St. *John* informs us, our works will follow with us; *Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them*; our works of faith and labours of love to bear witness for us, and to testify our sincerity.

Almost every nation and every people under the sun have had some notions of a future state, of a state of rewards and punishments; and they have thus far too been agreed in their sentiments, that virtue would introduce to the happiness of it; vice inevitably exclude therefrom. The Christian revelation hath settled this great fundamental of our faith upon the strongest basis, and given us unde-  
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niable testimony to the important truth, That a life of holiness, through Jesus Christ, will infallibly be crowned with the rewards of blessedness; that a life of disobedience to the laws, of disregard to the revelation of God, will undoubtedly end in sorrow and anguish unutterable.

Upon this view then can we ever weep, unless indeed the gentle tears of sympathizing humanity, tears of sorrow for our own great loss; otherwise, I say, should we ever weep, when we close the eyes, and pay the last honours to the remains of those friends, of whose faith we are assured, of whose blessedness we cannot doubt, because we know that they have died in the Lord; died in the faith and fear of Christ their Saviour, as they have lived in his faith and fear, in humble submission to his will, and dutiful subjection to his laws? For, indeed, there is but little hope that they should die in the Lord, who have never lived in the Lord; that they should die happy who have never lived holy.

But they who so live, blessed shall they die; they shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them; they shall rest a happy, glorious, everlasting rest, from sin, from sorrow, and from death; they shall rest in everlasting peace with God; he himself will be their God, will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and never more shall they know, or sorrow, or crying, or pain. *Their*  
*works*



*works shall follow with them*; and, however imperfect, yet through the love and grace of their Saviour, shall find an exceeding reward, and be had in eternal remembrance; they shall hear the joyful sound, *Come ye blessed; I was an hungred, and ye fed me; they shall hear, Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of my brethren, ye did it unto me*; they shall hear, and not only hear, but, while the celestial harpers are harping on their harps glad melody and songs of joy; they shall be admitted, admitted without fear of ever being cast out thence; admitted into the glorious kingdom prepared for them, into the joy of their Father, their Saviour, and their Lord!

Thus happy shall the admission of the Christian be into the future world; and death, under this notion of it, is again, we see, so far from an evil, that it is our greatest good, as setting us free from earth and from sin, and opening the door for the delighted soul to mount on the wings of love, and to soar into eternity.

It were easy to shew the excellence of the Christian's choice, and the blessedness of piety and virtue, by considering, on the other hand, the wretched condition of those to whom death is indeed, in this view also a fearful evil, as hurrying their affrighted souls from all the practice of sin, and the guilt of neglected truth and holiness, to the tribunal of impartial justice, and to the dreadful realm  
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where rest and peace can never enter; hope never comes that comes to all, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever.

But I forbear, as my design leads me principally to consider the more happy and the more pleasing view; namely, the blessedness of death to those who die in the Lord; whether death be contemplated as 1. A separation from the body, or 2. A departure from this world, or 3. An entrance into another. And I hope and trust, that what hath been said will not only tend to the consolation of those whose faith and life are witnesses that they desire to die in the Lord; but also awaken those, to whom death is yet terrible, to a serious sense of themselves, and an earnest labour so to live, that they may die in peace, and enter immediately into the joy of their Lord. For death will come; ye cannot avert the stroke; and who would wish to die hopeless, and plunge into eternity, worse than unprepared?

I will close the subject with a short application. Death is judged the greatest of all evils, but we have seen that our judgment is wrong, if death be considered with reference to the believer and the pious. It is not death that is an evil, but it is ourselves that make it so; nor is it death, merely considered in itself, that is an evil, it is the consequence which is of so much dread, the things that follow after. These, it must be  
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owned, are of the last importance, and to be insensible of their awful nature, and disregardful of their solemn obligations, is folly, is madness, is the worst delusion and the highest guilt.

Far be such unfeeling disregard from any of us; God give us wisdom to consider, and grace to pursue the things that belong to our peace before they are hid from our eyes! Preparation for death is a common duty, because death is a common concern. All of us are alike interested in it. All of us must one day tread the gloomy path; all of us must one day visit the silent grave; our eyes must all be closed; our throbbing hearts must all be at rest, and every spark of life forsake the senseless clay. But a few years hence, and not one of us, buoyant though we are with life, high in hope, elevated with delight, not one shall be found upon earth: and yet to shew us our own littleness and insignificance, we shall soon be no more remembered or regarded. A silent and tender tear, perhaps, may now and then drop from the affectionate eye of some dear remembring friend; but for the rest, others will occupy our places, and the business of the world will proceed with its usual vivacity; the sun will shine as brightly, the earth will be clothed as gaily, nothing in nature but will shew the utmost insensibility of our departure. But though there is an end of us upon earth, and though the proudest mausoleum

leant cannot long preserve our fame or memory, yet there is no end with us in that future world; we die only to live; we die only to enter on a state the most interesting, because it is unalterable. The day of our death is properly but our birth-day to life; life truly so called, because it is eternal. Bend we therefore all our care to provide an happy entrance into this unalterable state, then death, as we have seen, will be far from an evil, if, while it sets us free from a corrupted and afflicting body and an alluring world, it opens for us an happy door into the peace and glories of eternal rest. And such it will never fail to do, if we live the life we shall wish to have lived, when our anxious head is laid upon the dying pillow; for this is certain, that the only way to die peaceful and blessed, is to live well; is to live like those who know they must give an account, and must appear one day, for that end, before the awful tribunal of Christ; is to familiarize this solemn event to our souls, by frequent meditation upon it; is to establish ourselves in the faith and in the love of Christ Jesus, who hath endured the bitterness of it for us, and who hath taught us the way to victory. "This will be the only method to secure to us that peace and serenity of soul, which they seek for in vain, amidst the circle of every earthly good, who forget that they are to die, or who refuse to prepare for it: nay, indeed, the higher our relish for  
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mere sublunary enjoyments, and the greater our opportunity to gratify them, the more formidable and fearful must that stroke be which cuts us off from all, and which presents us with an universal blank." You therefore to whom Providence hath given an abundance of earthly blessings, oh! remember the Giver; remember that they cannot rescue from the grave; remember that an account of your improvements must one day be rendered up. You who are blooming in youth and elegance of form, oh! remember, that the fairest of flowers are soonest blighted; remember that external grace distinguisheth not in the house of death; and that beauty, unadorned by virtue, loseth more than half its charms: oh! remember, amidst the dissipating gaieties of this lively scene\*, that you are the servants of God, that you are bound by every motive of duty, of gratitude, of love, to pay him your best and constant services; remember, that the talents, wherewith he hath entrusted you, must one day be answered for: and that a state eternal and unalterable is the issue of your present conduct. And let me repeat, That in vain, perfectly in vain will you seek for *true happiness* in the round of worldly satisfactions; the rests not there; the steadfast faith, the virtuous life, the approving conscience, the pure, serene, content-

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\* This conclusion was delivered at *Path.*

ed mind is her only dwelling; seek her there, and she will attend you through all the innocent paths of social life, and enable you to meet death with a triumphant hope, a hope which shall not be disappointed; for *Blissed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours and their works follow them. They shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and they shall dwell with him for ever and ever.*

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## S E C T. XIII.

P R A Y E R, *the Grand Source of COMFORT,*  
*recommended and enforced.*

**A**S no true comfort can be had without *Prayer*, and as all true comfort may be derived from the right exercise of this important duty, nothing can more properly close our Consolations than a recommendation of *Prayer*, “that universal remedy for all the maladies of the soul.”

To this end we will first consider the true nature of *Prayer*; 2. The right method of performing it; and 3. The high obligations we are all under duly to perform it.

1. Whether it arise from tradition, from the light of reason, or from a natural instinct implanted

implanted in the soul, or from the concurrence of all these causes, certain it is, that there is and ever hath been a natural propensity in the mind of man to religious worship, to acknowledge a dependence, and pay a veneration to some superior and celestial Power. And this hath been so universal, that many writers have remarked, that man is more distinguished from the animal world by devotion than by reason; as several brute-creatures discover, in their actions, something like a faint glimmering of reason, though they betray, in no single circumstance of their behaviour, any thing which bears the least affinity to devotion.

It is much rather to be wondered that any man should be undevout, much more any one, who bears the name of Christian, than that all men should be naturally propense to devotion. Since the slightest knowledge of God, and of ourselves, the most general reflections upon our present state and circumstances, must be sufficient to awaken, in every reasonable mind, that awe and veneration, that humility and submission which are essential to prayer. For prayer, properly speaking, is no other than an expression of our dependance upon, and great obligations to God, as well as our perfect submission of all our necessities and desires to him.

It is not to be imagined that we lay our wants before God, or put up our petitions to  
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him, in order to inform him of those wants, or to make known to him our state and desires; omniscient as he is, and conscious even of the thoughts of our heart, we cannot suppose that he needs such information. Nor again are we to conceive, that the multiplicity of our words, or the weight of our arguments, will prevail with him, as if he were frail and mutable like one of us.—Such notions of God and of prayer are false and blameable; and let us remark, that upon these false notions are founded the objections of those who urge that prayer is unnecessary and unprofitable. Doubtless, it is unnecessary if nothing more was intended by it than informing of God, or nothing more aimed at than gaining our suit of him by our much speaking. But the truth is, neither of these are the true ends of prayer.

For prayer is the soul's sincere expression of its dependence upon God, and its humble acknowledgment, that all it hath, or can receive, proceeds from the free bounty of the all-wise Father of the world. And, as a right sense of this dependence, and this humble submission is the foundation of all religion, so prayer, as the most proper and expressive method to keep up and manifest that dependence, becomes a duty of the first and greatest consequence. And therefore we find, that, upon the right performance of this duty of prayer, God hath suspended all his promises both of spiritual and temporal comforts. He  
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hath given us the strongest assurances in his word, that prayers offered up, in a right spirit, shall never return ineffectual, but shall certainly prove availing at his throne for such good things as he, in his unerring wisdom, sees necessary for those who offer them up.

You see then, that prayer is the soul's sincere acknowledgment of its absolute dependence upon God; and that it is just as necessary to pray to God, as it is to keep up a right sense of this dependence, without which we cannot be religious in the lowest degree. And because our good Father knows the absolute necessity of this, therefore he hath made prayer still more indispensable to all Christians, by many positive precepts for the performance of it, and especially by making it the condition upon which he grants his spiritual and temporal blessings.

So that when free-thinkers object to you, that prayer is an useless and an absurd proceeding, *useless* because God knows what you want, without your informing him; *absurd*, because you can never imagine that your weak arguments can move him to change his purposes; you may tell them, that they mistake the nature of prayer; that you neither pray to inform God, nor to alter his purposes; but you pray to express your total and humble dependence upon *him* for every thing; and that you pray because he hath commanded you; because it is the highest instance of

your duty, and because, upon that condition, God hath promised to grant what is necessary for your present and future felicity.

“But some may say, doth not the Gospel in many places, give us reason to believe that importunity and frequency in prayer will avail before God; and doth it not seem from hence, as if he were influenced by human motives and arguments?”—Certainly the gospel assures us, that importunity and frequency in prayer will avail before God; *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* But when you have considered the reason why God promises to hear prayer at all, you will find that reason holds in all its strength, with respect to importunity in prayer. God promises to bless us in the use of prayer, because prayer is the best expression of that which is most becoming us, our absolute dependence upon God. Therefore the more frequently, constantly, and perseveringly we pray, the more do we ingraft upon our souls that sense of dependence, that humility and submission, which, above all things, recommend us to God. And, unfit as we often are to receive his favours, he frequently withholds them, till, by a long trial of our faith and dependence upon him, expressed by our perseverance in prayer, we become proper objects of his regard; nay, and sometimes he withholds them awhile for the brighter display of our Christian virtues; thus Christ rejected for some time the suit of the  
*Canaanitish*

*Canaanitish* woman, only for the display of her superlative humility and faith.

2. Now from these general observations on the nature of prayer, you may easily learn the proper method of performing this necessary duty: It is easy to see from hence how much they mistake the matter, who conceive, that either public or private devotion consists in the repetition of a certain number of words, or in continuing a certain space of time on their knees. It is very possible, and I fear very common, for persons to repeat forms of prayer morning and evening, and to attend every sabbath-day on the service of the church, and yet never to pray; at least, we cannot but judge so from the deficiency of those graces on one hand, in public life, which are inseparably connected with the right performance of prayer in the closet; and, on the other hand, from the evident inattention of many in public congregations; for, where there is inattention, there can be no prayer.

It is easy to count beads, to say *Ave Mary's*, to repeat forms; but it is no easy matter to collect the mind's whole attention, and to elevate the soul in humble adoration to its Father and its God. This is a work which requires much self-recollection; more especially with those, whose circumstances and situations in life oblige them to give much of their thoughts to the things of this world, and who are not so happy as to have frequent

opportunities for serious meditation. In such cases, however, it becomes the more necessary, that the times and occasions for retirement and for prayer, public or private, be well and properly improved, since, by that means, an habit of devotion may be acquired, and the soul obtain that spirit of prayer, which, at all times and in all places, will be carrying forth its desires towards God, and expressing, in short and fervent ejaculations, its inmost thoughts and wishes to him.

Now that your opportunities for prayer, of whatever sort, may be duly improved, take care that you set about this service (the most important as well as the most honourable, in which human creatures can be engaged,) in the properest manner. And in order to do so, endeavour before you address the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to impress your mind with a right and most awful sense of this eternal and almighty God! consider a few moments how dread a Majesty, how wonderful a Being you are about to adore! consider what great things he hath done for you, what great things he hath promised to you, and what duties he expects from you. And when the sense of his unutterable greatness naturally oppresses your feeble mind, especially under the reflection of your own meanness and manifold sinfulness, then to raise the proper feelings of gratitude and love, carry your reflections to that adorable

able instance of Almighty goodness, the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world! and under the awful impressions, which must arise from reflections like these, fall down on your knees before his footstool and perform your devotions to him!

I suppose that you have a form of prayer before you; this certainly is much best for the far greater part of Christians; few are able to express themselves as they ought before the God of Infinite Wisdom, without a form; yet it doth not by any means follow, that you should so strictly confine yourself in private devotion to your usual form as never to depart from it; if you find your heart warm within you, and your soul earnest to express its wants, or to offer up its praises, by no means check the celestial ardour, but pour out your holy raptures to the God of love! In the general, however, you will find it best to retain the use of a form; but in the use you must be as careful as may be to keep up your attention, and to collect your thoughts, which, alas! weak and imperfect as we are, will still be found vain and wandering; will give us sufficient cause to feel and express our own weakness; and will find us sufficient employment to keep in tolerable decorum.

The prayer which our Saviour himself hath taught us, is short and general; and we may learn from hence, that many words are not acceptable to God, and that we should not be

too particular, especially in our requests for temporal things. As prayer is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, we should remember, in all our prayers, that submission to his will, and absolute resignation to all his good pleasure, can never be separated from prayer. *Thy will be done*, is a petition never to be forgotten; for we often know not what we ask; we see only the present, but God sees through all times and events, and knows those consequences of things to which we are absolute strangers.

With respect to public prayer, it would be well that we endeavoured, as in private, to impress our minds with the most awful sense of the greatness of that God, whom we are about to address, as well as with the knowledge of our own state, wants, and imperfections. We should then come with dispositions better fitted to a right performance of the duty, and we should perform that duty in a manner much more acceptable to God and advantageous to ourselves. It could not fail to have a good effect upon every mind which desires not to offer up to God the sacrifice of folly; if, as we prepared for the public duties of religion, we were each one seriously to ask our own consciences, “For what end and with what design am I about to attend the public service of the church of Christ? If with any other purpose than to express my duty and dependence upon God, I am heap-  
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ing up to myself future misery."—A serious attention to some such question as this, would make us more careful of our lives; for a good life is the best preparation for prayer; would make us more careful of our behaviour in the House of God, where he is peculiarly present, where the eye of Omnipotence is full upon us; and where trifling compliments to each other should be omitted for solid devotion to our God; where our roving eyes should be fixed in humble regard to our duty: one good means of which would be to attend the services regularly in our Book of Common Prayer; and where it would contribute abundantly to the beauty and harmony of the service, if we complied with all the injunctions of the rubrics as we were able; and by our hearty union, in all parts of the service, kept up the warmth of devotion, and the exactness of those responses, which shew us to be attentive at least; which, doubtless, may be noisily made without any devotion; yet properly made, are beautiful, enlivening, and spirited.

In short, prayer, private or public, is the most solemn duty in which we can engage; a duty which is attended with the greatest blessings and comforts, if properly performed; but if improperly performed, we easily may conceive how odious our pretences to it must be to God, and how hazardous it must be to affront so great and terrible a Deity by an hypocritical

pocritical, indolent, and listless repetitions of words to him. Consider God, and you will tremble to do so; while in public you should consider, besides this, of what pernicious consequence to others unseemly behaviour is in the house of God; how derogatory to the honour of the Lord most High; how dangerous to yourself, and how offensive and hurtful to your fellow-creatures; a mark, an invariable mark of the want of good sense, good education, and of all religion.

3. Carefully then, avoiding all impropriety, let us be constant, fervent, frequent in the discharge of the duty of prayer; great and many are the obligations which we lie under to the discharge of it. But this is chief, that Christ hath not only set us the example of it in his own person, spending whole nights in the delightful exercise, and in an happy spiritual intercourse with his Father; but hath enjoined it upon us, as the channel by which he conveys all spiritual blessings to us. So that we are under the strictest obligations both of obedience to him, and of duty to ourselves, to be exact in this blessed office, without which we can have no communication with God, we can partake of no spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ.

See then, that without prayer, prayer in faith and humility, no man can be a Christian, or enjoy the comforts of a Christian; no man can be good and virtuous; for  
without



without it no man can have the help of God and the grace of Christ, and without these no man can perform works acceptable to the Supreme.

On the other hand, no man can pray in true faith and humility, and continue a bad man; (either his prayers will prevent him from sinning, or his sinning will prevent him from prayer,) for it is impossible to conceive any human being so deliberately and daringly wicked, as to kneel down solemnly before God, and implore his grace and assistance, while, at the same time, every moment of his life gives the lie to his prayer. We speak here not of formal lip-service, muttering of words; this may be consistent enough with a life of sin; but of such prayer as we have been above describing; with respect to which we may use the words of a serious writer of our Church, "Leave not off praying, for either praying will make you leave off sinning, or sinning will make you leave off praying."

Let us moreover observe, that as no man can be good without praying, or bad with it; so whoever is good at present may be certainly assured, that he will not long continue so, if he leave off this necessary duty, by which alone God's grace is derived to the soul. Look to the parched meadow, burnt up and withering for want of the rain and the dew of heaven! such is the soul of man  
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without the enlivening Spirit; and that Spirit is not only given, but is always given, to them that sincerely ask; *How much more will my heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him?*

I insist not on our many other obligations to prayer, nor on the fitness, reasonableness, pleasure and honour of the duty; its advantages sufficiently appear from hence, that without it we can neither be Christians, nor have any share in the exceeding consolations and blessings of Christ's religion and of God's paternal goodness: all religion stands or falls with the due performance of it, for religion consists in a proper and constant expression of our absolute dependence upon God, and such an expression constitutes prayer; which duly performed fills the heart with joy and comfort, unites us to God, and is a fund of perpetual cheerfulness and delight:—nay, as a proper conclusion, let us observe, that no greater comfort can be enjoyed, in any sort of affliction, than fervent faithful prayer.

“Dost thou then labour under a load of guilt, come unto Christ by humble faith and earnest prayer, and he will give thee rest. Dost thou feel the pressure of sorrow, or the blast of censure, instead of loathing thy being, instead of breaking out into sudden bursts of passion against thy foes, or contracting a settled gloom of malice; unbosom thy secrets and disburthen thy cares to him who is both  
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able and willing to resettle thy discomposed mind. All that invenomed rancour, which is apt to embitter our spirits against mankind in general, and our enemies in particular, when we suffer, or think we suffer undeservedly, will abate and die away, as we lift up our hearts to God in prayer, and, consequently, set our affections on the things above, reserved with that Father of mercy for us. Our thoughts, like the waters of the sea, when exhaled by the clouds towards heaven, will lose their offensive bitterness and saltness, leave behind them each distasteful quality, and sweeten into an amiable humility and candour; till they descend in gentle showers of love and kindness upon our fellow-creatures."

Happy effect of prayer which divests afflictions of their sting, and even can change malevolence into love! Pray therefore one for another; for what blessing cannot prayer obtain? It can dissolve the very flints into floods of water; it can shut heaven and open it again; it can make the sun and the moon stand still; it can raise the dead to life; it can stop the mouths of lions; it can suspend the fury of the most raging furnace; it can obtain children for the barren; it can conciliate the favour of princes: If we lack wisdom, by prayer we may gain it; if our sins be many and great, by prayer we may obtain pardon; if our lusts be strong and prevalent, by prayer we may have them weakened; if our graces

ces be infirm, by prayer we may have them strengthened. There is no evil which we feel or fear, but by prayer it may be removed; no good, which we either want or desire, but by prayer it may be procured. In short, prayer, faithful persevering prayer, can do all things upon the strength of the promise, *Ask and ye shall have!*

I need not use any arguments further to persuade you to the constant and sincere performance of this duty; you will not live in the neglect of it, so advantageous as it is to yourselves, so acceptable as it is to God.

“ This is the universal remedy; to finish with Bishop *Hall's* words, which a skilful physician hath ordained for all your grievances; *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.* Lo here the great and sovereign *Panpharmacum* of the distressed soul, which is able to give ease to all the forementioned complaints.

Art thou cast down upon thy sick-bed? call for the elders of the church, and let them pray. This was *Hezekiah's* receipt, when he was sick unto death; *He turned his face to the wall and prayed.* This was *David's* receipt; *Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord heal me, for my bones are vexed.* Take therefore the counsel of the wiseman, *My son, in thy sickness be not negligent, but pray unto the Lord, and he will make thee whole.*

Art thou soul-sick? pray; so did holy *David,*

*vid, The sorrows of hell compassed me about, and the snares of death prevented me: In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God.*

Art thou infested with importunate temptations? pray; so did Saint Paul, when the messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him; *Thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. So did David, While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted; thy fierce wrath goeth over me: but unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.*

Art thou disheartened with the weakness of grace? pray; so did David, *I am feeble and sore broken, I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart: Lord, all my desire is before thee.*

Art thou afflicted with the slanders of evil tongues? pray; so did David, *The mouth of the wicked, and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue: hold not thy peace, O God of my praise.*

Art thou afflicted with the loss of friends? pray, and have recourse to thy God, as Ezekiel, when Peletiah the son of Benaiah died; *Then fell I down upon my face and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah, Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?*

Art thou distressed with poverty? pray; so did David, *I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me: I became also a reproach to them, when they that looked upon me, shaked their*

*their heads: help me, O Lord my God; O save me according to thy mercy.*

Art thou bereaved of thy bodily senses? Make thy address to him that said, *Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb and the deaf, or the seeing or the blind? have not I the Lord?* Cry aloud to him with *Bartimeus, Lord that I may receive my sight:* and if thou be hopeless of thine outward sight, yet pray with the Psalmist, *O Lord, open thou mine eyes that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.*

Art thou afflicted with sterility? pray; so did *Isaac*, so did *Hannah*; she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore, and received a gracious answer.

Dost thou droop under the grievances of old age? pray; so did *David*, *Oh cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth, O God thou hast taught me from my youth; now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God forsake me not.*

Art thou troubled and dismayed with the fears of death? pray; so did *David*, *My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave? I am counted with them that go down into the pit, I am as a man that hath no strength. Free among the dead, thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deep: but unto thee have I cried, O Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.*

Dost thou tremble at the thought of judgment? so did the man after God's own heart;

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*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments: Look up with Jeremiah, and say to thy Saviour, O Lord, thou hast pleaded the cause of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life, O Lord judge thou my cause.*

Lastly, art thou afraid of the power, malice, subtilty of thy spiritual enemies? pray; so did *David; Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God, defend me from them that rise up against me; O hide me from the secret council of the wicked; Consider mine enemies for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred; O keep my soul, and deliver me:* So did *Saint Paul* pray, that he might be freed from the messenger of Satan whose buffets he felt, and was answered with, *My grace is sufficient for thee;* so he sues for all God's saints, *May the God of peace tread down Satan under your feet shortly.*

Shortly, whatever evil it be that presseth thy soul, have speedy recourse to the throne of grace; pour out thy heart into the ears of the Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort, and be sure, if not of redress, yet of ease: we have his word for it that cannot fail us; *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me:* Fashionable supplicants may talk to God: but be confident, he that can truly pray, can never be truly miserable; of ourselves we lie open to all evils; our rescue is from above; and what intercourse have we with heaven but by our

prayers? our prayers are they that can deliver us from dangers, avert judgments, prevent mischiefs, procure blessings; that can obtain pardon for our sins, furnish us with strength against temptations, mitigate the extremity of our sufferings, sustain our infirmities, raise up our dejectedness, increase our graces, abate our corruptions, sanctify all good things to us, sweeten this bitterness of our afflictions, open the windows of heaven, shut up the bars of death, vanquish the power of hell. Pray therefore, and be both safe and happy.

T H E E N D.

A P P E N D I X.



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# A P P E N D I X.

## I.

*Serious* ADVICE to a *Person recovered from*  
SICKNESS.

By the late Bishop GIBSON.

**S**INCE it hath pleased God to recover you from your late sickness, and to grant you a longer continuance in the world; I hope one of the first things in your thoughts, is to reflect upon the condition you have been in; which you could not be so well able to do, under the pains and disorders of a sick-bed. And as I doubt not but you are seriously disposed to consideration, especially after such a warning of mortality as you have had; so I assure myself that you will esteem it an act of true friendship in me, that I offer you my assistance therein; having no other intention in doing it, but to confirm the good dispositions which the sight of the grave hath raised and improved, but which a new prospect of life will be apt to destroy again, unless they be renewed upon the mind by serious consideration on your part.

I. The first step then towards our reaping the benefits which God designs in visiting us, is to consider sickness, not so much in the natural, as the religious sense; not as it takes away our natural strength and spirits, and so disables us for the business of this world; but as it is a nearer view of death, and a sensible proof of the frailty of our nature, and thereupon a seasonable warning to be in a constant preparation for our end. In like manner, the pains and agonies that we feel in the time of sickness, are not to be considered barely as an uneasiness to the body, but more especially as a lesson to the soul, to make it less fond of continuing in this painful state, and more willing to be removed, whenever it shall please God to call. Nor is the time or continuance of sickness to be reflected on as so much lost from the business or pleasures of life, but rather as a check that God gives to our worldly pursuits, in order to make way for thoughts and considerations of a heavenly nature.

II. For, as in all the other dispensations of life, so particularly in this of sickness, you must have your eye chiefly upon God, or else you will never make a right judgment nor a right use of it. If you look no further than the body, or to what cause or accident the indisposition was immediately owing, the effects will reach no further than the body; nor will your sickness work any other care or concern  
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in you, than how to remove the cause, and avoid the accident for the time to come. But certainly, as God can do nothing but for wise and good ends; so when he visits us with sickness, it cannot be the only or chief end he aims at, to afflict and punish the body; because this life is not the proper season of punishment for sin; and to think that God grieves and afflicts his creatures for no other reason but because it is in his power to do it, or because he chuses it and delights in it, is by no means consistent with the Divine Goodness. He himself assures us, *Lam. iii. 3.* *That he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men;* and if he sends sickness unwillingly, this implies that he would not send it at all, if something in our condition did not require it, and some benefits were not to be conveyed to us by it. But now it is certain, that no temporal benefits accrue to us by sickness, which is a manifest prejudice to the body and estate; and therefore the benefit that God designs us by it, must be of a spiritual nature, for the good of the soul; and so when the Scripture speaks of God's unwillingness to afflict the body, the meaning must be, that he would not do it, if it were not the ordinary means of conveying good to the soul. And since the first foundation of the good that sickness works, is the bringing us to a serious consideration of our future state; this shews us, that the bed of sickness must not be for-

gotten, nor the thoughts of it laid aside, as soon as we are restored to our bodily health and strength. That is rather the proper time of setting ourselves to think regularly and effectually; when our bodily pains are removed or abated, and God hath set the terrors of death at a greater distance from us, and so our minds are at liberty to reflect with due attention and deliberation.

III. When you have considered the true end of God's visiting mankind in general; go on, and apply this to your own condition in particular, by satisfying yourself of the need and occasion you had to be thus visited by the hand of God. Do but look back upon your former life, and you will probably find, that till then you had been supine and lukewarm in religion, and did want to be awakened out of that spiritual sleep, into a sense of your duty: that you encouraged yourself in sin, by setting death and a future state far from you, and therefore needed to be roused from your security, by a nearer view and apprehension of them: that you had long forgotten and neglected God, and had need to be thus smitten with his hand, to bring you to a sense of his power and justice: that ease and health had betrayed you into too great a fondness for the delights and interests of this world, and so it was necessary for God to interrupt your enjoyment, and teach you the folly of setting your  
heart.

heart on this world, by reminding you of the uncertainty of your continuance in it.

These and the like reflections upon the follies and failings of your former state, will shew you the goodness and mercy of God in visiting you with sickness: you will see, that there was a great deal of corruption in your heart, which could not be discovered and let out, but by putting you to some pain; and that whatever you have endured, is not to be compared to the misery you had been in, if a course of ease and health had still gone on to hide that spiritual corruption from you. And the sense of God's goodness herein, will convince you, that the stripes you have received were the chastisements of a tender Father; to whose hand you therefore listen and submit with all humility and thankfulness, saying as *David* did in the like case, *Psal. cxix. 75, I know, O Lord, that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled; and ver. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.*

IV. When you have duly reflected, what the state of your soul was before the time of sickness, and have made yourself sensible of the goodness of God in sending it; go on, and consider seriously, what your condition would have been, if this sickness had proved your last; how your accounts stood with God, and what preparation you had been in to meet death; whether it would not have found you

going on in some known sin, or indulging yourself overmuch in the pleasures and enjoyments of life; whether you had in any measure applied yourself to the study and practice of God's laws, and lived in a due regard to the holy ordinances of prayer, preaching, and the blessed sacrament: in short, consider seriously, whether before sickness came, you had not thought too little of another life, and whether death, if it had then come, would not have been a very great surprize to you. And if, upon this enquiry into the frame of your soul before sickness, you see that it had found you in a sinful or lukewarm, that is, in an unprepared state; you then know, that if it had not pleased God to spare you, you had been doomed, ere this, to irrecoverable destruction. And the sense of this should oblige you to employ all the powers of body and soul, in praising and blessing God for his unspeakable mercy and goodness, and should also be a warning never to run such a desperate hazard again, but to set yourself seriously to think of death, and not to be at ease in your mind, till you find you are prepared for it; that so, as our Saviour speaks, *whenever your Lord comes, you may be sure to be found watching.*

V. Next to the Divine Goodness, first in visiting you with sickness, and then in delivering you from death; remember what your  
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own thoughts and resolutions were, while you lay upon your sick-bed.

Did you not think it great folly to have let so much time pass away, with so little preparation for your future state? Now God hath given you more time, let it be your care to employ it more wisely.

Did you not wish, over and over, that heaven and the happiness thereof had been your chief care? why then, make amends for former neglects, by your future diligence in the work of your salvation.

Could you not have been content to give all the world, if it had been yours, for a little space to consider better, and to make your peace with God? now a longer space is granted you, forget not how valuable you thought it, but make it a real blessing to you, by improving it to the ends for which you so earnestly wished and prayed for it.

Did you not make repeated promises and resolutions, that if it should please God to prolong your life, you would live to him, and serve him faithfully and sincerely all your days? You see, God hath granted what you desired, and now he expects that you perform what you promised: he vouchsafes you longer life, to prove whether your resolutions were sincere and in earnest; and if you forget them, you provoke him either to bring upon you some heavier judgment, to try how far that will work; or, which is far more terrible,

rible, to give you up to final destruction, when he sees that neither his judgments can awaken you, nor your own promises and resolutions bind you. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, saith the wiseman, Eccl. v. 4. defer not to pay it.* Every promise and resolution you made in your sickness, was in the nature of a solemn vow to God; and the sincerity of that vow depends not so much upon your intentions while you were sick, as upon your performances now you are well. If you had died, none but God could have judged of your sincerity; but now you live, if you forget your vow, this will be a plain and open declaration that it was not sincere, but was only the effect of the fears and terrors of death; it will show, that you have profited nothing by the chastisements of your heavenly Father, but are one of those perverse and untractable children, who will be no longer good than they see the rod hanging over them. But I am persuaded better things of you, and do heartily hope that your late promises and resolutions are fresh in your memory, and that you are making haste to ease your mind of whatever burden you found upon it, in the time of your sickness; that is, in few words, that you are now doing whatever you then wished had been done.

VI. Particularly, If your conscience did then charge you with any act of injustice, delay not to make restitution to the utmost of your power: if your sickness found you in a  
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state of enmity with any person, do your part towards a speedy reconciliation: if you had not then settled your worldly concerns, defer not to settle them now in such manner as may best preserve peace among those you leave behind, whenever it shall please God to take you away: if you found great comfort of mind, in being joined by the minister and other good Christians, in prayer to God; now you are released from your confinement, seek and enjoy the same comfort in a serious and diligent attendance on the worship of the Church: if in that weak condition of body and mind, you desired to be partaker of the blessed sacrament, and found yourself grieved that you had not frequented it more in the time of your health; you see, it has pleased God to restore your health, and therewith an ability of considering and preparing yourself; fail not therefore to come frequently to the Lord's table, during the remainder of your life. In short, recollect diligently, what were the sins, failings, and neglects, that you then found yourself most sensibly grieved and concerned at, and let it be your first and immediate care to set these right; assuring yourself, that the condition of your soul is really such as you saw it in the time of your sickness, and esteeming it the greatest blessing of your recovery, that it gives you time and opportunity to clear the guilt of your former life, and to  
prepare

prepare for your future account, by a steady course of repentance and amendment.

VII. There are many things concur, in the time of sickness, to raise good resolutions in the hearts of men; as, the thoughts of present death, the immediate prospect of a future state, and an unfitness of body and mind to attend the cares or relish the pleasures of this world: But when health returns, these motives to seriousness do not only cease, but are succeeded by motives to lukewarmness and forgetfulness, as, the hopes of long life, the distance of a future account, and a delight in the business and entertainments of the world. It is therefore necessary, now you are restored to health, to be warned of these temptations, in order to be prepared against them; considering yourself not as discharged, but only reprieved from death, and that as God granted the reprieve, so none but God can tell how long or how short it is to be: that the preparation for your future account is not the work of a dying-bed, but the business of your whole life; and the more of life is spent, the more diligently are you concerned to attend this work: that as God sent sickness, to turn your thoughts upon your spiritual state, and to shew you the many imperfections in it; so he has given you health, that you may have space and opportunity to supply and amend these imperfections: that God, who is training you up for

a future state, cannot be supposed to have prolonged your life, only that you may have the pleasure to eat and drink so many days, and sleep so many nights longer in this world, but as in all his other dispensations, so particularly in these of sickness and health, his great design is to engage us in a diligent pursuit of our future happiness; by sickness to moderate our desires after this world, and mind us of our condition in the next; and by health, to give us the opportunity of approving ourselves to him, and preparing us for heaven, by a steadfast course of obedience and devotion.

VIII. Take therefore this merciful warning that God has given you, and improve it diligently to the purposes he intended; remembering that it will be a proportionable aggravation of your guilt, if you resist these gracious endeavours for the salvation of your soul, and give no proofs of your growing better under his hand. Consider also, that this may possibly be the last warning, with time for repentance and amendment, that he will give, and that your next sickness may end in death, or, which is worse, death may seize you on a sudden, without any warning at all. And if you now despise his chastening, and thereby provoke him to give you up to sudden destruction (as nothing is more like to provoke him to it,) you will have nothing to blame but your own perverseness, in not complying

complying with the methods which he had taken for your salvation.

Do not then trifle with God; but while he gives you opportunity, be wise unto salvation. He has been administering sickness in the nature of a remedy to your soul, and, now that is over, he is waiting to see what good effects it has had; what changes it has wrought in the thoughts and resolutions of your heart; how much it has taken off your mind from the delights of this world, and turned your desires upon heaven and the things of the next life; how much more serious and careful of your ways you will be for the time to come, than you have hitherto been; how heartily you will set yourself, on one hand, to root out all evil habits, and, on the other hand, to attain the Christian graces and virtues which are wanting in you. In short, God has, in great mercy, given you new life, and he is now waiting to see whether you will become a new man.

And while he is thus waiting for *you*, how can you forget and neglect *him*? Is God so greatly concerned for you, and will you have no concern for yourself? When you see him thus labouring, both in the way of mercy and judgment, for the salvation of your soul, how can you resist so much goodness? how dare you provoke so much power? You have already been under the hand of God in your late sickness, and what you have hitherto felt  
has

has been the chastisement of a tender Father ; and, if you will be wise, it may be improved into the greatest blessing he could have sent ; but if you will not listen to his correction, you do, in effect, defy him, and cast him off, and you may find the next return of his hand, to be changed from the chastisement of a tender Father, into the vengeance of an angry God.

IX. I write not this, as if I thought you had forgot your late sickness, or had been chastised and visited in vain ; but being sincerely desirous of your spiritual welfare, I omit no argument either of love or fear, mercy or judgment, that may help to cherish and keep alive the good thoughts and resolutions which your late sickness hath raised in you. These, for ought you can yet tell, were only the effects of the fears and terrors you were under, and now is the time to make it appear that you meant them in earnest, and that they are your settled choice and judgment ; which, I hope, is what you have not only resolved to do, but what you are now doing, in a just sense of the uncertainty of life, and of the happiness of being always in a preparation for death. And that God will be pleased to give you grace and strength to persevere in your good resolutions, and to continue steadfast in the way that leads to eternal life ; you ought, at all times, to be particularly fervent at the throne of grace.

## II.

*On a MOTHER'S Grief for the Loss of her  
Infant DAUGHTER\*.*

BEAUTY in distress commands our compassion; and when that distress is rational, affects the heart with the tenderest sympathy. There is a natural benevolence in every mind, inciting to wipe away the tears and repress the anguish of affliction in general; but, in the case of fair female sorrow, we are irresistibly carried on to every attempt that may administer comfort to the lovely sufferer. How much more, when the ties of friendship bind to a more anxious concern, and permit us not to be indifferent to any thing respecting the felicity of our friend!

I sensibly felt the truth of this yesterday, when I called at the house of my worthy acquaintance Mr. *Goodvile*; where I found gloomy sorrow had taken her abode. The countenance of the servant who introduced me, gave me immediate notice of some unhappy catastrophe; and, upon enquiry, I found it to be the death of my friend's little and only daughter, who had not stayed one year with her affectionate parents, but in her *eleventh* month was removed from this scene of trouble.

\* From the *Visitor*.

My familiarity in the family gave me admission to Mrs. *Goodvile's* mournful apartment; and I have not beheld a scene of much deeper distress. Mrs. *Goodvile* is in her nineteenth year, completely handsome, amiable, and virtuous. Happy in the husband of her wishes, as he in the wife of his soul, no idea can be formed of greater conjugal felicity. The little infant, source of their present sorrow, was heretofore the great object of their highest joy and pleasure: the child of their first love, and tenderest affection. When I entered the room, my gentle friend raised up her languid head, looked with an aspect the most expressively afflicting, — sighed, and burst into a flood of tears. Dumb as a statue by her side fate her husband, no less distressed: he spoke not—he could not speak; he only waved his hand, and wished me to take my seat. In this dumb sorrow we remained some moments, doubtful who should break the solemn silence; while my heart was touched with a sensation which I never felt in that degree before; as indeed I never had seen such an object as Mrs. *Goodvile*, whose negligence of dress heightened her usual beauty, and whose tears, glistering in her eyes, added fresh charms to them—charms I mean of attractive grace and innocence.—“Oh, Mr. *Wilson*, at length, said she, our poor babe.”—She could proceed no further,—nor could I reply. My friend endeavoured next to interrupt the silence; but he had little better success.

However, as reason and friendship both seemed to call upon me, I resolved to raise my spirits, and endeavour to exert both.—“It grieves me, my dear friends, said I, to find you thus totally immers'd in sorrow; and only because God who gave, has been pleas'd to recal his gift; to recal it from a state of trouble and trial to a realm of undoubted happiness.”——“But how hard is it, said she; how hard to part with the sweet creature, whose little endearments have so fastened it to the heart, that to tear it thence is worse, far worse than dying: Oh that I had died with thee, my *Nancy*, my *Nancy!* my sweetest babe, would God I had died with thee.”——“My soul's best comfort, said my friend, that's the most unkind and cruel word I have heard from those dear lips since we have mutually mourned together. Do not I partake of my charmer's sorrow? Was not my babe dear to me? Dearer than all things on earth, except its tender mother: but would she not judge me most unkind, if I should abandon all comfort with its loss; nay, and even wish to attend my pretty one to the grave!”——“Good madam, said I, permit me in all the tenderness of friendship, to request that you would use that reason which you so happily possess, upon this occasion; that you would put into practice the precepts of that amiable religion which you have hitherto so much adorned. I grant your loss  
great



great and affecting; but consider that as your little angel knew but few pleasures here upon earth, on that account its departure is less to be lamented; it hath no great loss. Then recollect on the other side, what immense gain it receiveth, admitted to divine happiness; and safely lodged in the kingdom of that Saviour who careth for his little ones. Besides, reflect, that amidst the various temptations of the present world, a perseverance in virtue is difficult and precarious. And what a shock would it have been, if God had spared it, to have seen it deviating from right, and forsaking its duty? Rather, I am persuaded, a thousand times rather would you attend it to the grave.”—“ Oh, but I would have watched its little mind, said she with a stream of tears,—I would have planted every seed of virtue there: I would have wearied Heaven with prayers for the good of my sweet babe! And there was room for every hope! It shewed, already shewed every promising temper.”—And cannot the gracious Providence, replied I, who blest you with so engaging an infant, to make you the mother of an angel in his courts;—cannot he bless you with one as engaging? Consider your own and your husband’s youth; and do not, by an unreasonable and ungrateful sorrow, raise the indignation of God against you; and thereby prevent the hopes of future blessing. At the same time, for God’s sake, consider how much worse

this stroke might have been, and how much more severe you would have acknowledged the blow, if it had also cut off the husband of your love; who now partakes your sorrows, and lives to administer the most tender consolation."—"Indeed, my dearest wife, said he, in this gloom that reflection hath given *me* much relief; and, if with me, I doubt not but it will equally prevail with you. Had Heaven deprived me of my best-beloved, my affectionate companion, the loss had been heavy indeed!"—"Your tenderness, my love, said she, must ever relieve my distress: oh may I strive continually to deserve it. But, my sweet babe,—oh I cannot forget her,—such innocence, such pretty affection. Good God, pity and forgive me, if I am too much concerned!"—It was difficult to administer consolation to so soft, so lovely a complainer. However, I was enabled to observe, that she herself granted resignation to God's will to be one of the principal of all Christian duties; the wisest and most reasonable; since God knows what is *good* for his creatures, far better than they can be supposed to know themselves; and is no less gracious than powerful to bestow what he knows to be such; for he is our Father: that he frequently withdraws earthly blessings, when our hearts are too much attached to them, to lead us to himself; and to wean us from the world to heaven and eternal regards: that in all afflictions,

we should thus reason, looking to the cause and the end: and that as bliss undoubtedly attends a babe, secured in the haven of rest, from all the storms and tempests of this life, there is more of *self-love* than rational concern in immoderate grief for such, whose end we should rather congratulate, and for whose departure we should rather be thankful than uneasy.

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## III.

*Archbishop TILLOTSON's Letter to a FRIEND of his, who lay very ill of a languishing distemper, whereof he died.*

S I R,

**I** Am sorry to understand by Mr. J — 's letter to my son, that your distemper grows upon you, and that you seem to decline so fast: I am very sensible how much easier it is to give advice against trouble, in the case of another, than to take it in our own. It hath pleased God to exercise me of late with a very sore trial, in the loss of my dear and only child; in which I do perfectly submit to his good pleasure, firmly believing that he always does what is best: and yet, though reason be satisfied, our passion is not so soon appeased; and when nature has received a wound, time must be allowed for the healing of it. Since that, God hath thought fit to

give me a nearer summons, and a closer warning of my mortality, in the danger of an apoplexy; which yet, I thank God for it, hath occasioned no very melancholy reflections; but this perhaps is more owing to natural temper, than philosophy and wise considerations. Your case, I know, is very different, who are of a temper naturally melancholy, and under a distemper apt to encrease it; for both which great allowances are to be made.

And yet, methinks, both reason and religion do offer to us considerations of that solidity and strength, as may very well support our spirits under all the frailties and infirmities of the flesh; such as these, that God is perfect love and goodness; that we are not only his creatures, but his children, and as dear to him as to ourselves; redeemed by that precious Son, who is the Prince and Pattern of sufferers: that he does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men; and that all evils and afflictions which befall us, are intended for the cure and prevention of greater evils, of sin and punishment; and therefore we ought not only to submit to them with patience, as being deserved by us, but to receive them with thankfulness, as being designed by him to do us that good, and to bring us to that sense of him and ourselves, which perhaps nothing else would have done: that the sufferings of this present life are but short and  
flight

flight, compared with that extreme and endless misery which we have deserved, and with that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which we hope for in the other world; that if we be careful to make the best preparation we can for death and eternity, whatever brings us nearer to our end, brings us nearer to our happiness: and how rugged soever the way be, the comfort is, that it leads us to our Father's house, where we shall want nothing that we can wish. When we labour under a dangerous distemper that threatens our life, what would we not be content to bear, in order to a perfect recovery, could we be assured of it? And should we not be willing to endure much more in order to happiness, and that eternal life, which God, who cannot lye, hath promised? Nature, I know, is fond of life, and apt to be still lingering after a longer continuance here; and yet a long life, with the usual burdens and infirmities of it, is seldom desirable; it is but the same thing over again, or worse; so many more days and nights, summers and winters; a repetition of the same pleasures, but with less pleasure and relish every day; a return of the same or greater pains and troubles, but with less patience and strength to bear them.

These and the like considerations, I use to entertain myself withal, and not only with contentment, but comfort: though with great inequality of temper at several times, and with much mixture of human frailty, which will

always stick to us, while we are in this world. However, by these kind of thoughts death becomes more familiar to us, and we shall be able, by degrees, to bring our minds close up to it, without starting at it. The greatest tenderness I find in myself, is with regard to some near relations, especially the dear and constant companion of my life, which, I must confess, doth very sensibly touch me; but when I consider, and so I hope will they also, that this separation will be but for a little while; and that though I shall leave them in a bad world, yet under the care and protection of a good God, who can be more and better to them than all other relations, and will certainly be so to them that love him, and hope in his mercy, I receive comfort.

I shall not need to advise you what to do, and what use to make of this time of your visitation. I have reason to believe that you have been careful, in the time of your health, to prepare for this evil day, and have been conversant in those books which give the best directions to this purpose, and have not, as too many do, put off the great work of your life to the end of it: and then you have nothing now to do, but as well as you can, under your present weakness and pain, to renew your repentance, for all the errors and miscarriages of your life, and earnestly to beg God's pardon and forgiveness of them, for his sake who is the propitiation for our sins; to comfort yourself in the goodness and promises

mises of God, and the hopes of that happiness you are ready to enter into; and, in the mean time, to exercise faith and patience for a little while. And be of good courage since you see land; the storm you are in will quickly be over, and then it will be as if it never had been, or rather the remembrance of it will be a pleasure.

I do not use to write such long letters, but I do heartily compassionate your case, and should be glad if I could suggest any thing that might help to mitigate your trouble; and make that sharp and rough way, through which you are to pass into a better world, a little more smooth and easy. I pray God to fit us both for that great change, which we must once undergo; and if we be but in any good measure fit for it, sooner or later makes no great difference. I commend you to the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, through the merits of his dear Son; beseeching him to encrease your faith and patience, and to stand by you in your last and great conflict; and that when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you may fear no evil; and when your heart faints, and your strength fails, you may find him the strength of your heart and your portion for ever. Farewel, my good friend, and while we are here let us pray for one another, that we may have a joyful meeting in another world. I rest Sir, your truly affectionate  
Friend and Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

DEVO-

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 DEVOTIONS suited to the foregoing  
 CONSOLATIONS.

## C H A P. I.

*For the Afflicted in General.*

*For a PERSON under the Pressure of heavy AFFLICTION.*

O Thou most holy and righteous God, who orderest all things in heaven and in earth, and with the greatest tenderness dost hear the cries of all who put their trust in thee through *Jesus Christ*; I believe, Lord, help my unbelief, that in wisdom, mercy and holiness thou dost appoint unto me every circumstance of my condition. I desire to look through all second causes to thee, O Lord God, who makest them merely instruments to do thy will, and execute thy purpose respecting the children of men. O thou infinitely wise and gracious Governor of the world, often have I said, *Thy will be done.* But now thou art pleased to afflict me, I find my nature ready to shrink back, and to be clamorous or fretful under the sacred but painful cross. What I have often so solemnly repeated, I am strongly tempted to unsay; and to wish my own will, not thine, was to take place.

Make speed, O God of my salvation, and help me to deny myself, to bow down in free and full submission to thy appointment of my condition. Bring powerfully to my remembrance, I beseech thee, what my mouth hath so often declared in thy presence, that I have deserved all the plagues written in the book of thy law: and that it is  
 mere



merc mercy and rich grace which have kept me from the wages due to my sin, from weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth in torment. Whilst thou art therefore smiting me, O thou righteous Judge of all the earth, give me an heart unfeignedly to adore thy mercy, that, instead of the scourge with which I am now corrected for my profit, thou hast not long since given a commission to the sword of vengeance to do all its dreadful work upon me. O fill my soul with a perfect acquiescence under this affliction, by convincing me that thou and thou alone, O God, knowest what manner of correction I need. Thy eye discovers the folly, the perverseness, and many sinful disorders of my soul, and can alone adapt a remedy to the disease. O that I might obtain grace, therefore, to remain in meek subjection to the Father of spirits, and to bear the stroke of thy hand, not merely because none can oppose thy will, but because the stroke is given to heal and bless.

Take away from me all thoughts that are without understanding, and so busy to press into my mind, raising objections against this particular way in which I am tried. Make me to believe it is the very affliction proper for the particular state of my soul. And, in the midst of my troubles, let thy comforts, O Lord, refresh my heart, and relieve the weariness and pains of nature, by the supernatural supports of thy grace and spirit. Thy mercies are not restrained, neither is thy hand waxed short; what thou hast done for thousands of the sons and daughters of affliction, do for me, even for me, O my God. If my heart be less tender, less sensible, thou canst cure that evil, and make my present affliction the means of curing it.

Thus,

Thus, O Lord, let it be; and at length in thy due time, and in the way which thou shalt chuse, send forth deliverance for me, and shew me thy marvellous loving-kindness; for I well know how dark soever this night of affliction seem, if thou sayest, Let there be light, there shall be light. O let me patiently wait and quietly hope, till that time of mercy come. Let me be much more concerned to have my affliction sanctified than removed. Number me, O Lord, amongst the happy persons, whom whilst thou chastenest, thou teachest out of thy law. Shew me, I beseech thee, wherefore thou contendest with me; and whilst I am passing thro' the furnace of affliction, O let it purge away my dross, and take away all my iniquity. In thy presence, and under the supports of thy Grace, I can bear any thing, and am willing to bear, if I may grow more conformable to thy will, and more largely partake of thy holiness.

As my foolish heart is ready to grow fond of this earth, O let the disappointments and afflictions I meet with in it, loosen my affections, and put an end to all my sinful attachments to any thing below. O teach my soul to receive every trouble as a call to cease from expecting any thing of the creature, and to be preparing for that hour which shall put an end to all the sorrows and trials of the righteous, and give them an entrance into the everlasting kingdom thro' the blood of the Lamb, in which they wash their robes white. O Lord, hear; O Lord, perform and do; defer not, I beseech thee, lest my spirit faint before thee, and the flesh which thou hast made. *Amen.*

CHAP. II.

*For the Afflicted in Mind.*

*A Prayer which a Soul may use, that is full of doubts,  
and troubled in mind.*

**O** Lord, the *Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*, I acknowledge and adore thy eternal power, wisdom and goodness. I render thee my most hearty thanks for all the benefits thou hast freely bestowed on me, from my first coming into the world until this time. *Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works, which thou hast done, and thy thoughts, which are to us-ward, they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.* Above all I bless thee for that great demonstration of thy love and goodwill to mankind in Christ Jesus, whom thou hast sent into the world to save sinners: and for bringing me to the clear knowledge of him, faith in him, and some love, I hope towards him, and unfeigned affection to thy holy will, declared to us in his blessed Gospel.

O God, thou hast taught me from my youth up, and hitherto been marvellously gracious to me. Hide not, I beseech thee, thy face now from me; and put not thy servant away in displeasure. Thou hast been my help, leave me not; neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. But for Jesus Christ his sake I humbly intreat thee to pardon and pass by all my neglects of thee, and unthankfulness to thee, and offences against thee. And as I here  
sincerely

sincerely devote and dedicate my whole self, soul and body, to thy service ; so help me, O my God, and further me in the performance of my duty, by the grace of thy holy spirit. To thee all hearts are open, and from thee no secrets are hid : deal with me according to the earnest desire and full purpose of my soul, to conform my self in all things to thy holy will.

Settle in me an immovable faith in thy infinite mercies, a constant love and chearful affection to my duty, and a readiness of heart to obey thee, and to submit to thy wise appointments in every condition. The whole earth is full of thy mercy : thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing : O refuse not the humble desires of my poor soul, which gaspeth after thee, even as the thirsty land. Thou who givest to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens when they cry ; O satisfy me early with thy mercies, that I may rejoice and be glad all my days. Compose my broken and disturbed thoughts, quiet my troubled and disordered spirit ; and appease all the ragings and tumults there, by a sweet sense of thy most tender mercies, which have been ever of old, and endure continually.

Banish from me all causeless fears and jealousies ; deliver me from all unprofitable sadness and dejections of spirit ; keep me from rash judging of my self, and much more from charging thee foolishly. Bestow upon me a chearful spirit, by an humble hope in thee ; and by referring myself wholly to thee. Endue me with such wisdom and uprightness, that I may neither neglect my duty, nor suspect thy gracious acceptance of me. Give me an hearty zeal to do the best that I am able ; and a  
settle.

settled persuasion, that thou requirest no more of me.

Defend me, O my gracious God, from dishonouring thee, and my religion; by distrusting thy goodness, and calling thy loving kindness in question towards those that are sincerely bent to please thee. Remove all troublesome imaginations from me, and give me a clear understanding of thee, and of myself. Or when I am in darkness and confusion of thoughts, grant me so much light and judgment, as not to conclude myself forsaken by thee, but to reflect upon thy long-continued favours to me, and many deliverances of me; that so I may resolve still to hope in thee, to bear my present trouble patiently, and to resign my will absolutely to thy good pleasure. And, good Lord, enable me to look beyond these clouds, to that blessed state whither my Saviour is gone; in which there is no darkness at all; and in an humble hope of coming to the same place where he is, to content myself with any condition whilst I am here, so far remote from that region of light and glory.

Hear me, most loving and merciful Father, I most humbly beseech thee. Pity my great dulness and deadness of heart. Strengthen my weak and feeble endeavours. Support my fainting spirit, and cause it humbly to hope in thee for ever. Confirm and establish every good thought, desire, and purpose which thou hast wrought in me. Perfect that which thou hast begun. Make me to grow in wisdom, faith, love, and willing obedience. Conduct me hereafter so evenly and steadily, so peaceably and quietly, so cheerfully and securely in thy ways; that I may glorify thee whilst I live, by encouraging others to accompany me in thy service.

service. And when I come to die, may resign my soul unto thee with an undisturbed mind; in an holy hope also of a joyful resurrection of the body, at the great day of the Lord Jesus; to whom be glory and dominion for ever. *Amen.*

*Another for the same, or for one under deep melancholy and dejection of spirit.*

○ Most good and gracious Lord, thou knowest our frame, and art a God full of compassion to pity and relieve thy servants, under their trouble and oppression. Look down, we humbly beseech thee, with thy wonted pity, and remember in tender mercy the work of thy hands, our disconsolate friend, this troubled soul, that is even distracted in suffering thy terrors: thy wrath lies hard upon *him*, and all thy waves are gone over *him*; they disturb *his* peace, oppress *his* mind, and make *him* unfit rightly to use *his* reason, or discharge *his* duty. O thou that speakest the winds and waves into obedience and calmness, settle and quiet *his* discomposed thoughts; speak peace and satisfaction to *his* troubled mind, and give *him* comfort and sure confidence in the sense of thy pardon and love. Lord, help *his* unbelief, and increase *his* faith. Though *he* now walks in the valley and shadow of death, let *thy rod and thy staff* comfort him. Let *him* trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon *his* God. In the multitude of the thoughts and sorrows that *he* hath in *his* heart, O let thy comfort come in to refresh *his* soul. Be thou pleased, Lord, to deliver and ease *him* of the load that lies upon *his* spirit: and let in a beam of thy heavenly light to scatter and dispel all the clouds and darkness, in which *his* mind is wrapt up. O direct to the means most proper  
for

for *his* help, and bless and prosper them so, that they may be effectual to promote *his* recovery out of this sad and cōleful estate. Incline *his* ears to wholesome counsels, and fashion *his* heart to receive due impressions: O gracious Father, pity *his* frailty, and forgive *his* sin: heal *him*, O Lord, both in soul and body, and rebuke *his* distemper so, that *his* disquieted soul may return to its rest. O raise *him* up, and make *him* whole; yea, make haste, O Lord, to shew such mercy upon *him*, even for thine own mercies sake, in Jesus Christ our blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for one convinced of sin.*

**G**OD, be merciful to me a sinner: a sinner beyond expression! How shall I lift up mine eyes towards thee, O thou most holy, or take thy name within my polluted lips! O Lord, thou needest not my confession to inform thee, for thine eye hath been ever upon my path; and the things that have come into my mind, thou hast known every one of them. The vanity of my childhood, the folly of my youth, the obstinacy and rebellion of my riper years, are all written in thy book. Alas! thou knowest I was conceived in sin, and have lived in sin ever since I was born: all thy commandments have I broken, all thy mercies have I abused, trifled with thy patience, resisted thy spirit, and rejected thy gospel, times without number.

So foolish and ignorant, so stupid and hardened, unthankful and unfaithful have I been; a transgressor from the womb: such has been my life. What then must my heart be, the fountain from whence all these streams of bitterness have flowed? O Lord, thou hast said it, and I cannot deny it,

my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: I am wholly defiled. There is no sound part in me. I am full of pride and ignorance, unbelief and self-will; my boasted strength is weakness, and my best righteousness as an unclean thing before thee. I owe thee ten thousand talents, but have nothing to pay. I am bound to a perfect obedience, but I cannot perform. O wretched man, who shall deliver me? Wherewithal shall I come before the most high God? Will sighs, or tears, or promises answer the demands of thy law, satisfy thy justice, and avert thy righteous anger? or where shall I hide my guilty head? O Lord, my flesh trembleth, my heart faileth before thee. I am afraid of thy judgments. I have deserved them all; and shouldst thou now pour forth thy wrath upon me unto the uttermost, even in the midst of my sufferings I must own thy justice. Shouldst thou shut out my prayers, and say, Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire; I must be dumb. But, O Lord, tho' I have thus destroyed myself, is there no help, no hope in thee? Hast thou not revealed thyself in thy word, as "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin?" and hast thou not commended thy love to poor lost sinners, in giving thine only Son to be the propitiation for sin? hath not thy kind providence put thy gospel into my hands, to prevent my sinking into despair? Thou hast been pleased to inform me of the sinless life and meritorious death of thy only begotten Son, of the grace of his heart to the chief of sinners, and the intercession he ever lives to make for the world that come to thee by him: and though it is amongst my most abominable sins,  
and



and the cause of them, that I so long slighted this record of thy Son, I now see and feel, that except he saves me, I must undoubtedly perish for ever. All, that believe in him, he will save; and I am taught in thy word, that faith is thy gift, and of thy operation in the soul. O bestow and work in me the work of faith with power, I beseech thee, unworthy as I am. Enable me to behold the suffering wounded Lamb of God, who poured forth his soul an offering for transgressors. O help me to believe that he has his own self bore my sins in his own body on the tree; that he has delivered me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me. O let me feel the powerful efficacy of that blood which cleanseth from all sin: O let that spirit which Jesus is exalted to bestow, testify of him to me, and glorify him in my eyes, that my troubled conscience may enjoy peace, and my soul find rest in Christ. Gird me with strength for thy blessed service, and redeem me by thy mighty grace from the power of all iniquity, from the hands of all my enemies, that I may live devoted to thee for ever. O spare me, good Lord, that I may be a monument of the riches of thy mercy, and an instrument of spreading thy praise, who art just, and yet the Justifier of the sinner and the ungodly, through him whom thou hast held forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood.  
*Amen.*

*A Prayer for the increase of faith in Christ.*

**E**Nlarge, I beseech thee, O Lord my God, my narrow heart to receive thy precious promises in all their power and fulness. If the faint hope I already have that thou art my reconciled Father, was not founded upon thy own faithful word, it

would indeed be presumption to ask of thee to confirm it. But since thou hast given to them that believe exceeding great and precious promises, that they might be partakers of a divine nature; and by thy immutable word and oath, hast provided that all who fly to Jesus Christ for refuge, should have strong consolation, O give me to enjoy the inestimable benefit. Lord, I do believe, help thou mine unbelief. Adored be thy free grace, for what thou hast already done; but O perfect thy work in me: make me strong in faith, that on all occasions I may give glory to God. Thou hast shewn me something of my own misery. I see, I feel myself a lost creature without thy salvation. Thou hast also given me some understanding to know him that is true, even the almighty Saviour; and every hope of mercy not founded upon him, I renounce. I have cast myself at his feet, and said, Lord, save me, or I perish. I cannot doubt his power, but O forgive me, that I so often doubt his love and willingness to save such as I am, though I know for this purpose he appeared in the form of a servant, and gave up the ghost in groans and agonies, and bled upon the cross.

O let me know in whom I have believed, so as no more to doubt, nor be in darkness. Persuade me fully of my own sincerity in intrusting my dearest concerns into the hands of Christ, and of his willingness and ability to keep that which I have committed to him against the great day; to preserve me from falling, to support me under all my trials, to defend me against all my enemies through this state of warfare, and at length to present me faultless before thy glorious presence with exceeding joy.

Fain

Fain would I rely upon thy faithful promises ; fain would I rejoice in hope ; but, alas ! an evil heart of unbelief deprives me of those comforts and privileges provided in the gospel for returning sinners. Let the Sun of righteousness shine forth with healing in his beams, scattering the mists and clouds which hang upon my mind. Give me grace to seek this blessing, by diligently reading thy holy word, by being instant in prayer, constant in the use of all ordinances, and circumspect in all my conversation. Let me not remain ignorant of the devices of Satan, that he may neither terrify me by his malicious suggestions, nor seduce me under the appearances of an angel of light, to depart one step from the rule of thy word, either to do what thou hast not commanded, or to expect what thou hast not promised. But having my heart, my hope, my eye fixed upon thee alone, may I cheerfully wait for the accomplishment of all the good, both in time and in eternity, promised to them that are in Christ Jesus. I ask this in his name. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for Repentance.*

**G**LORY be to thee, O Lord God almighty and everlasting, for exalting thine only begotten Son to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins to us miserable offenders, who have no power of ourselves truly to repent.

Make us, we beseech thee, O God, duly sensible of this thy great mercy, and of our absolute need of it, that neither the consciousness of our guilt may deter us from imploring thy pardon, nor the love of sin delude us to fancy we can cast away our transgressions and repent whenever we will. O convince us that we cannot turn and prepare our-

selves by our natural strength to call upon God. Save us from flattering ourselves, as we are prone to do, that sickness or pain, adversity or the approach of death, can of themselves dispose us to a repentance not to be repented of. Give us an understanding to know, that if we are no longer hardened in sin, it is because the Lord maketh our hearts soft; if we are brought to God and accepted of him, may we most thankfully acknowledge, that it is because the Lord hath granted us repentance unto life. And never, O God! let the pride of our own hearts, or the erroneous judgment of the world, lead us to deny or to forget, that every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; who of his own will begets sons and daughters to himself with the word of truth.

And as thou, O Lord God! hast commanded all men every where to repent, and declared, that except we repent we must perish, O suffer not, we beseech thee, our pride to lead us to justify ourselves, as the Scribes and Pharisees did of old, refusing to be baptised with the baptism of repentance. O let not any benefits we may have enjoyed from education, through thy preventing or restraining grace, puff us up to think we need no repentance. Let not the commendations of men, nor any excellencies we possess in their opinion, seduce us to imagine we need not feel all the workings of a truly contrite heart, or prompt us to say, because we are innocent, therefore shall wrath be turned away from us: from such blindness and hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us; suppress it in its first risings; convince us there is no greater provocation in thy sight than for man, that is born  
 of

of a woman, to exalt himself—than to say, I am clean without transgression; I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me, for which I ought to mourn and repent before God.

And do thou, who art a God of pity, instruct us by thy spirit, that we may perfectly distinguish between true repentance and every false appearance of this precious grace. Give us to know, that freedom from gross iniquities is not sufficient proof that we are passed from death unto life, and numbered by thee, our God, amongst repenting sinners. Let no other evidence satisfy us that we are ourselves of that happy number, than the inward experience of our vileness and condemnation for sin; nothing but the loathing of ourselves for the evil of our ways and of our doings; nothing but the forsaking of every sin, and feeling within ourselves a heart humbled for our transgressions, and depending wholly for remission of sins on the blood of thy Son. O may all these inseparable properties of true repentance be found in us; may they always appear to have influence on our tempers and practice, proclaiming to all about us, that we are universally changed and made new creatures in Christ Jesus.

And as we pray thus, O Lord! for the blessing and gift of true repentance for ourselves, so do we intreat thee to have mercy upon all who are in the misery and under the anguish of a wounded spirit. Lead them to a compleat repentance; give them beauty for ashes, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may flourish as trees of the Lord's planting, that he may be glorified. Pity those who are putting off their repentance to a sick bed, and a dying hour; who, whilst they are acknowledging they cannot but pe-

rish without they repent, love their sin so desperately as to put off calling upon their God to an hour that they cannot be sure of. O convince them of their madness, and bring them to the right use of their reason and the calls of thy word; that they may make haste to fly for refuge, whilst it is the accepted time and the day of salvation.

Finally we beseech thee, O God, for thy own name's sake, and for thy truth's sake, lift up by thy spirit a standard against the horrible profaneness, which is come in upon our land like a flood: take away from the wicked the Iye in their right hand, who imagine that it shall be well with them in eternity, even though they die without true and faithful repentance.

Pull down, O God! even to the ground, this strong hold of thine enemies; may none cry to themselves, Peace and safety, till they are alive from the dead, and till their iniquity is purged; till they walk as dear obedient children by faith in Christ Jesus.

These spiritual and everlasting mercies we implore from thee, O God of all grace! in dependance upon his all-sufficient merits and never-ceasing intercession, who has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name to every creature, even Jesus Christ the Righteous.  
*Amen.*

*A Prayer in time of Temptation.*

**A**Lmighty God, and most merciful Father, who art greater than all things, send down thy help from above and deliver me from the temptations that now attack me; and as I put my trust in thee, O let me never be put to confusion, nor suffer me to be tempted above that I am able  
to

to bear ; but make me a way to escape, that I may not sin against thy divine Majesty. Make me seriously to consider the great folly and danger of sin ; that its pleasures are short, but that its punishments are endless and intolerable ; that no satisfaction can compare with the joys of a good conscience, nor is any trouble like that of a wounded spirit. Give me a clear idea of the terrible state of those who fall under the rod of thy displeasure. Convince my conscience of the sinfulness of what I am now tempted unto, and shew me its contradiction to thy will and my baptismal vows. Give me, I pray thee, the light of thy word, that I may not be deceived by this wicked world, but certainly know, that how pleasant soever it may now appear, there will come a time, when this and all other enticements of this world will appear vain and contemptible : a time when all workers of iniquity shall be destroyed, and when a crown of righteousness shall be given to them who have fought the good fight, and kept the faith unto the end. Grant therefore that the mighty power of thy grace may so raise my courage, and strengthen my faith, that nothing may stop me in my christian warfare ; but that fighting manfully under Christ's banner, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, I may at last triumph with him in his heavenly kingdom ; to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for one under Fears and Doubts, as to the goodness of his spiritual condition : or under perplexing thoughts and scruples about his duty.*

**O** Lord our God, we come unto thee in behalf of this thy servant, whose soul is cast down  
and

and disquieted within *him*, by reason of the fear *he* has of not being in thy favour, and not accepted by thee. *He* questions whether *he* has not all along presumed on the goodness and safety of his condition, without having any reason for it. And for this the sorrows of *his* heart are enlarged, and *he* is brought very low. To thee therefore we cry on *his* account, that thou wouldest be pleased to hear *him* speedily, and bring *his* soul out of prison. Remove from *him*, we entreat thee, all frightful apprehensions, all perplexing doubts and scruples about *his* duty, which will either hinder *him* from doing it at all, or make *him* do it heavily and with a troubled mind. Let *him* not indulge *his* fears as a sign of tenderness of spirit, and the fruits of thy grace, but rather let *him* labour against 'em, as *his* spiritual disease, or as Satan's temptations.

O make *him* satisfied and settled in a right understanding of all good things, and careful in the observance of them, and do thou expel, by the light of thy countenance, all these mists of darkness which cloud and obscure *his* soul, that *he* may not unnecessarily be dejected and distrustful of *himself*, or dishonourably jealous of thee. Deliver *him* from all *his* offences that may provoke thee to hide thy face from *him* and make *him* so much a stranger to peace and comfort: and cause *him* to be delighted with doing thy will, and to place *his* chief satisfaction in acting so as is most agreeable to thee, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.

*A Prayer for one who is hurried with wicked and blasphemous thoughts.*

O Lord God, who art the Father of our spirits, and to whom all thoughts are open, and all desires known; we humbly entreat thy fatherly good-



goodness to succour and relieve this thy servant, who labours under the burthen of wicked thoughts and blasphemous suggestions. Thou knowest, O Lord, how painful and uneasy such thoughts are to *him*, how contrary to the sense *he* has of thy excellencies and perfections, and how earnestly *he* desires to be freed from them. Thou seest how much *his* soul is cast down, and how disquieted *his* spirit is within him. That at these hellish suggestions *his* heart trembleth, and is moved as it were out of its place. And though the troubles of *his* heart are thus enlarged, *he* finds no way to be brought out of *his* distress. To thee, therefore, we humbly presume to apply ourselves, and to entreat that thou wilt look upon *his* affliction and *his* pain, and forgive *him* all *his* sin. We know, O Lord, that nothing is impossible with thee, that thou stoppest the raging of the seas, and canst as easily rectify the tumultuous thoughts of a disordered mind. O let thy power and greatness be shewn in healing the mind of this thy servant. Cleanse the thoughts of *his* heart by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit. Suffer them not to be defiled by any wicked, profane, or blasphemous suggestions mixing with them. But heal the soul of thy servant, by enabling *him* to stifle and suppress all such thoughts as tend to vex and torment it, to rob it of its peace, and deprive it of its innocence. To this end, enable thy servant to keep all *his* passions within due bounds, to be of an equal and steady temper, to be mild and gentle in *his* behaviour, and neither to set *his* hopes nor *his* fears too high. Make *him* to abide in the calling wherein *he* is called, and not forsake the station wherein thy providence has placed *him*, but to do *his* duty in that state of life to which thou hast called *him*.

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Let *him* not think the worse of thee, or accuse thy providence of want of care of *him* ; since if thou pleasedst thou mightest have permitted such thoughts to have continued perpetually without any intermission, or at least to have visited *him* much oftener, and in a more frightful manner, without the least diminution of thy justice. Make *him* sensible, therefore, of the wise and kind reasons of these afflictions ; that if they are duly improved, they may be powerful preservatives of *his* soul against the prevailing sins of a loose age ; may lessen *his* inclinations to the enjoyments of this life, and deaden *his* appetite to sensual pleasure and the perishing goods of this world ; that by these afflictions *he* may be disposed to compassionate the sufferings of others, and less to envy their height and prosperity ; that they tend to make *him* more to feel *his* own infirmities, and to perceive the want of divine assistance, and to carry *his* thoughts to heaven : all which advantages shew that it is in faithfulness that thou afflictest mankind ; and that although for the present all affliction is grievous, yet it is our own fault if it does not work out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. But in vain, O God ! are all these considerations, unless thou pleasest to set them home on our minds. To thee, therefore, we address ourselves, that thou wouldest open the eyes of this thy servant, that *he* may see and know the wise and gracious dispensations of thy providence, and by humbling *himself* under them, may be at last lifted up and made a partaker of that peace and joy which thou bestowest on all thy faithful servants. Grant this for Jesus Christ his sake our only Mediator and Advocate.

*A Prayer*

*A Prayer for one who is afflicted with a profane mistrust of divine truths, and blasphemous thoughts.*

O Most gracious God, who by the power of thy spirit, art only able to cure our sickness, and overcome the unruliness of our minds; protect this thy servant, we humbly and earnestly entreat thee, against all profane doubts and mistrusts of thy truths, and against all blasphemous thoughts and suggestions about divine things, which either *his* own melancholy and disorder'd fancy, or the busy and wicked adversary, are ready to represent and suggest to *him*.

Never suffer them, O God, to stagger and weaken *his* faith, nor to hinder or clog *his* practice; nor, if thou pleasest, by their wearisome conflicts, to be a pain and burthen to *his* life. Preserve *him*, not only from the sin, but if it may seem good to thy fatherly wisdom, from the temptation too, and from the trouble and sorrow of them.

But if it be thy blessed will, to continue these profane and terrifying thoughts for his trial and humiliation; Lord, make *him* sensible, and comfort *his* disturbed heart with the sense thereof, that it will not be imputed as a sin to *him*, to be tempted therewith, but to yield to the temptation; convince *him*, that in thy sight *he* is not guilty of the same, whilst *he* neither believes nor gives place to them; not altering or abating either *his* faith or *his* practice thereupon. Let *him* know, that these distrustful and blasphemous thoughts are the enemy's sin, who, to try and tempt *him*, studiously and wickedly suggests them; not *his*, who instead of hearkening thereto, and complying therewith, immediately resists them as soon as he perceives  
 them,

them, and casts them out with horror and indignation.

Oh that during this trial *he* may learn to depend intirely upon thee, without whom *he* can do nothing, that as often as these profane thoughts are thrown into *his* mind, *he* may find grace to overcome them, and without the least allowance or delay, to throw them out again, and that *he* may learn to bear with *himself*, and to shew patience under them, as under every other affliction and trial of thy ordering, trusting to thy grace to assist *him*, and to thy mercy to accept *him*, whilst *he* is humbly labouring under the same; and to thy goodness, to deliver *him* from them in thy due time, for our dear Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for one under the dread of God's wrath, and everlasting damnation.*

**O** Almighty God, the aid of all that need, and the helper of them that flee to thee for succour; accept, we beseech thee, the prayers that we now put up for this thy servant, labouring under the dismal apprehensions of thy wrath. Oh, who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry! *his* flesh trembles for fear of thee, and *he* is afraid of thy judgments. *He* is not able to bear up under the thoughts, that thy mercy is clean gone, and that thou wilt shew *him* favour no more.

But do not thou, O God, enter into judgment with *him*; make *him* sensible, that though the wages of sin be death, yet the gift of God is eternal life: that thou hast the death of a sinner, and art not willing that any should perish: that thou always punishest less than we deserve, and  
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in the midst of judgment rememberest mercy: Oh do thou set this home on *his* mind, that so *he* may be brought off from *his* distrust of thy mercy, and from thinking *his* sins unpardonable by thee. For his sake who suffered on the cross, and made there a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, deliver *him* from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation. Hide not thy face from *him*, but revive *his* soul with a sense of thy love, and the hopes of thy pardon, and of obtaining the joy of thy salvation; that so *he* may be raised again from this dejection, and may shew with gladness what thou hast done for *his* soul; all which we humbly beg for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

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### C H A P. III.

#### *For the afflicted in Body.*

*A Prayer to be said by the family or friends, when a sickness continues long.*

**B**Ehold, O Lord, thy poor unworthy servants, who here most humbly bow themselves unto thee; acknowledging that we deserve not to live, nor to have the least regard for thee in our distress, whom we so much neglected when we enjoyed our hearts desire. Be merciful unto us, O Lord, be merciful unto us, for the sake of him, who shed his own most precious blood for the salvation of returning sinners. We come unto thee with sorrowful hearts, bewailing our foolish wanderings from thee; and with sincere love, vowing more faithful obedience hereafter to thee.

*Prayed*

Blessed be thy goodness that we have such good hope thou wilt not cast us off, but restore us again into thy grace and favour. It encourages us to hope in thee also for this thy sick servant, here lying under thy hand in great weakness of body. Look graciously upon *him* (or *her*) O Lord, and now that *his* outward man is much decayed, strengthen *him*, we beseech thee, so much the more by the grace of thy Holy Spirit in *his* inward man. Give *him* unfeigned repentance for all the errors of *his* life past; a stedfast faith in thy Son Jesus; a comfortable assurance of the truth of all his precious promises; a lively hope of that immortal bliss, in which he reigns for evermore; and a strong sense of thy fatherly love to *him*, and care over *him*, under this sore and grievous affliction; which may make *him* heartily love thee, and entirely confide in thee, and absolutely resign both soul and body to thy wise disposal.

We know there is nothing too hard for thee; but that, if thou wilt, thou canst bring *him* up even from the gates of death, and grant *him* a longer continuance among us. May it be thy good pleasure, O most gracious God, still to continue *him*! Spare *him*, O Lord, and deliver *him* also speedily from this misery, under which *he* hath so long groaned. Bless all the means that are used for *his* recovery, and for the support of *his* spirits; and give *him* refreshment during this tedious sickness. Release *him* from *his* pain, or grant *him* some ease; or else increase and strengthen *his* patience. Help *him*, in remembrance of thy past loving kindness, to trust in thy goodness, and submit to thy wisdom, and bear with an equal mind, what thou thinkest fit to lay upon *him*; that *he* approving *himself* to thee, in these and all other virtues,

virtues, while thou triest *him* by so sore an affliction, may say at the last, it was good for me that I was in trouble.

Unto thy infinite mercies we recommend *him*; and to the compassionate kindness of our Lord Jesus: who we hope will hear all the prayers of *his* friends for *him* every where; and send *his* good spirit to be *his* comforter, and *his* good angels to be *his* guardians; and direct those who are to advise and prescribe the means of *his* restoration; and bring *him* to praise thee again in the assemblies of thy saints on earth; or if thou hast otherwise disposed in thy wise counsels, to praise thee in the great assembly of saints and angels in heaven; thro' Jesus Christ our Lord and only Saviour; to whom with thee and thy Holy Spirit, be all praise, love, and obedience, world without end.  
*Amen.*

*A Prayer for a sick penitent.*

**R**ighteous art thou, O God, in all the pains and sorrows which punish our sins, and try our patience, and we have none to accuse or complain of for the same but ourselves. This is the acknowledgment which thy servant makes, whom thou hast now afflicted. *He* receives it as the chastisement of a sinner, and is willing to bear chastisement for *his* sins, that *he* may thereby be reclaimed from them. Correct *him*, O Lord, that thou mayest not condemn *him*, and let *him* be judged by thee for *his* sins, and judge *himself* for them here, that *he* may have nothing but mercy, without judgment, to receive at thine hands hereafter.

But judge *him*, O God, with mercy, and not in thine anger. Judge *him* not according as *his* sins have deserved, but according as *his* weakness can bear, and according as thy compassions are wont

to mitigate thy judgments ; and let *his* afflictions work in *him* a true repentance, not to be repented of, and prove an happy means, in the hand of thy mercy, to expiate *his* guilt, not to encrease it, and to reclaim *him* perfectly from all the evils which *he* hath committed formerly, not to occasion *his* committing more, and to confer that rest and peace upon *his* soul, which is denied to *his* body, for our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ his sake. *Amen.*

*A Prayer when a person is giving up the Ghost.*

**I** Resign my spirit, O God, most chearfully into thy hands, hoping to find mercy with thee thro' Christ Jesus. I know no other name under heaven whereby I may be saved, but thine alone, O blessed Jesus ; who wast dead, and art alive again, and livest for evermore. I come unto thee, O Lord, confiding in thy most precious promises, (which I believe are faithful and true as thou art) for pardon and for immortal life.

Accept, I beseech thee, of my most hearty thanks, for all thy mercies to me, from the beginning of my life to this moment. Pass by all my ingratitude and disobedience. Receive me into the company of the spirits of just men made perfect, to give thee thanks for ever.

And as I desire to find mercy with thee, so I forgive all my enemies ; beseeching thee likewise to forgive them ; to bless and comfort all my friends ; to make thy whole church glorious ; and to bring us all at last to live together in everlasting love and joy, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



*A Thanksgiving after recovery from sickness.*

**M**OST gracious and merciful God, to whom alone belong the issues of life and death; I thy unworthy servant, who have been under thy afflicting hand, and am raised again from the bed of sickness, do here present myself before thee, in a thankful sense of thy great mercy and goodness towards me. Thou hast chastened and corrected me, but thou hast not given me over unto death. Thou hast saved my life from destruction, and crowned me with mercy and loving kindness. Blessed be thy holy name, for supporting me under the pain and anguish of my sick bed, for the reasonable supplies of patience and comfort which thou didst graciously afford me, and for restoring me in thy good time to the blessings of health and strength\*.

But I know, O Lord, that the pain and weakness wherewith thou hast visited me, were not for the punishment of my body, but for the improvement of my soul; to let me see the frailty of my nature, and the uncertainty of my life; to wean me from the delights of this world, and to engage me in a serious preparation for the next: in all which I thankfully acknowledge thy fatherly care over me, and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be afflicted.

I adore the riches of thy goodness, in giving me a right knowledge of thee and thy ways in these thy dispensations to me, and in making them the happy means to bring me to a sense of the evil of my doing, and to a serious consideration of my

C c 2

future

\* *When any person, during the time of sickness, hath been light-lealed, he or she may add, [and to the perfect use of my reason and understanding.]*

future state. Before I was afflicted, I went astray, I forgot my duty to thee, and followed the imaginations of my own heart; my thoughts were taken up with the business and entertainments of this world, and the care of my soul was neglected and forgotten. But thy chastisements have brought me back into the right way; and now, to my unspeakable comfort and happiness, my affections are placed upon the things above, and the things that concern my everlasting salvation. To thee, therefore, O my God, who hast not cut me off in the midst of my sins, but hast in great mercy given me space for repentance and amendment; to thee will I live, in holiness and righteousness, all my days; forsaking every evil way, and studying above all things to do that which is well-pleasing in thy sight. I am heartily grieved at the sins and vanities of my former life, and do here solemnly renounce them all; more especially those which I have been hitherto most guilty of, and to which my own corrupt inclinations, or the snares and temptations of the world are most like to betray me for the time to come\*. And, in a sense of my own weakness and frailty, I earnestly implore the assistance of thy Holy Spirit, to subdue my inordinate desires, and break the power of all evil habits, and to keep me stedfast in every promise and resolution that I made before thee, in the day of my distress; all which I do now, in thy presence, most sincerely and heartily renew. And I beseech thee, let me never be drawn to forget or neglect them, either by the cares and pleasures of this world, or by the hopes of a long continuance in it; but give me grace always to make  
make

\* Here confess the sins you have been most guilty of, and against which you do therefore particularly resolve.

make eternity my chief care and concern; and let thy late gracious warning of mortality teach me the uncertainty of my abode upon earth, and oblige me to live in a daily preparation to die. That so, having duly profited by thy fatherly chastisement, and employing the remainder of my days to thy glory and the salvation of my own soul, I may be found watching whenever my appointed time shall come, and may change this frail state of mortality for an immortal crown of glory. All which I humbly beg of thee, thro' the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour and Redeemer. *Amen.*

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C H A P. IV.

*For the Afflicted in Estate:*

*An act of resignation when a friend is dead.*

**I** Adore thee, O Lord, I bow my very will, with my whole soul, to thee; whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways are past finding out. I believe thou intendest to do me good, even by denying my earnest, and so often repeated desires. I will bless the Lord, therefore, at all times. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.

I have received innumerable good things from thy hands, O Father of mercies, why should I not receive those that are evil? The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? I humbly take it from thy hands, O my God, and submit to thy wise dispensation. I return to thee back again, that which thou so lovingly bestowedst upon me; with my most hearty thanks for lending me the

enjoyment of it so long. Do but pardon all my ingratitude, all the omissions of my duty, and whatsoever I have done contrary to it; and I shall endeavour to rejoice in thee always, and still to be praising thee under the sharpest chastisements, which are less than I deserve.

Blessed be thy goodness, that I am not without hope of this gracious pardon. Blessed be thy goodness, that thou hast not taken away thy Holy Spirit from me. Yea, blessed be that goodness, that hath left me still so many worldly blessings, which many want, and have lost their dearest relations too. It is of the Lord's mercy, that lovers, friends and acquaintance, together with all other comforts of this life, are not quite gone away from me, and removed into darkness. Blessed be God, that I am not groaning on a sick bed; and that I languish not under the most tedious pains [*blessed be God, that I want not my daily bread, that I am not oppressed with debt, that I lie not in prison, or am not turned out of doors, having no certain dwelling-place*]. Yea, blessed be God, that all my days have not been so miserable, as some few have been. Blessed be God, that the days which I and *he* [or *she*] (who hath now left me) spent together, were not all bitterness and sorrow; but were sweetened by the enjoyment of many, very many good things.

O my soul, never cease to bless the Lord; forget not all his benefits: especially his great love, his exceeding great love in Christ Jesus, by whom he hath provided a remedy for all our griefs, and comforted us with the hope of another and better life; where there is no death, nor any pain or sorrow, but all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes.

To thee I flee, O blessed Jesus, who art my best and my eternal friend. To thee, who knowest our frame, and canst have compassion on our infirmities : most humbly beseeching thee, to bear me up under this sore affliction, in a thankful remembrance of all thy mercies. Yea, draw up my heart thereby, more towards heaven ; where thou my Life art ; [where I hope my *husband, wife, or friend* is] where I hope to be when thou shalt call me away from hence : there to sing thy praises with incessant joy, in the company of all thy saints, and of the holy angels. *Amen. Amen.*

*A Prayer for the use of a child that hath lost its  
parents.*

**O** Lord, who never failest those that seek thee, but givest his food to the beast, and to the young ravens which cry ; I cast myself upon thy infinite goodness, with whom the fatherless have been wont to find mercy : be thou, O Lord, Father and God of my life, a most merciful and gracious Father unto me ; and provide what thou seest, in thy wisdom, to be necessary for me.

Especially, bestow upon me some faithful friend that will admonish me, and take care of my soul, to bring me up religiously in the fear of thee my God. Preserve me from all distrust of thy good providence. Give me favour in the eyes of others, by an humble, submissive, and good behaviour towards them. Make me diligent and industrious in some honest calling. And bless my labours and endeavours, that I may not be a burthen unto others. But whatsoever my portion be in this world, give me grace to live so piously, justly, and soberly, that I may not miss of that incorruptible

inheritance, which fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for us ; through Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

*A Prayer to be used by a Widow.*

**O** God, by whose wise providence, which I humbly adore and reverence, I am left without my dearest companion and guide in this our pilgrimage ; and thereby deprived of the sweetest comfort of life : behold the desolate and sorrowful estate of thy poor handmaid, who supplicates thy tender mercy and compassion towards her. Comfort me, good Lord, with a delightful sense of thy divine presence with me ; and draw my heart the nearer to thee, in holy love and devout affection, and a lively hope, that thou wilt never leave me nor forsake me.

I ought to thank thee at all times, for the many tokens of thy love towards me ; and particularly for lending me this blessing so long, the value of which I now feel, by the want I am in of its support. Pardon me, I beseech thee, that I have not been so thankful for it, and the rest of thy mercies, as I ought ; nor so carefully improved them as I might have done. O take not away thy loving kindness from me in displeasure : but vouchsafe still the continuance of thy favour towards me ; especially the support of thy divine grace, by the Power of the Holy Ghost, to enable me to bear this affliction with an humble, meek, and patient spirit.

Moderate all my passions : free me from all discontented and distrustful thoughts : help me to cast all my care on thee, who relievest the fatherless and widow, and carest even for the strangers. Fix my mind upon thy love in the Lord Jesus ; in  
whom

whom thou wouldest have us to rejoice always. Lift up my thoughts to those heavenly enjoyments in that blessed place where he is, [*to which I hope my husband is departed*]. And help me to follow after him with all diligence, in a pure, grave and godly conversation; and, by a careful education of my children, to endeavour that they may be also with us in that glory.

Let thy blessing ever rest upon them. And now, that they are left to me alone, give me so much the more wisdom to instruct and govern them aright; and so much the more love to them, and tender affection to their good and welfare. Make them to be a comfort for me in my widowhood, by their increase in godliness, that we may chearfully serve thee together, in prayers and thanksgivings and reading of thy holy word, and communion with our blessed Saviour, and all other actions of a Christian life. Prepare us for whatever condition, into which thou shalt be pleased to bring us; that neither fulness nor poverty, honour nor reproaches, health nor sickness, may ever separate us from thy love in Christ Jesus; but we may persevere in patient obedience to thee, till we receive that crown of life, which he hath promised to them that love thee. *Amen.*

*A Prayer under losses and damages in our goods and estates.*

**A**lmighty God! the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, the world is thine and the fulness thereof. Teach me to be content as well when I am abased and suffer need, as when I abound: for, as it will profit a man nothing to gain the whole world and to lose his soul; so all the losses in the world cannot undo him, whose  
soul

soul is safe in thy hands. Let me not grieve therefore, as if I were undone, for what I have lost ; but incline my heart to commit myself chearfully unto thee, as knowing that I have in heaven a better and an enduring substance of good things to come. And seeing how little any thing is to be confided in here on earth, grant that I may look less on temporal things ; and so provide for the good of my soul, and be so rich towards God, that when all here shall fail me, thou mayest be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever ; all which I humbly pray for, through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*A Prayer to be said by such as are poor and low in the world.*

**O** God, I believe that for just and wise reasons thou hast allotted to mankind very different states and circumstances of life ; and that all the temporal evils, which have at any time happened unto me, are designed by thee for my benefit. Therefore, though thou hast thought fit to place me in a mean condition, to deprive me of many conveniences of life, and to exercise me in a state of poverty ; yet thou hast hitherto preserved and supported me by thy good providence, and blessed me with advantages\* above many others, who labour under great troubles. And, O merciful Father, if thou seeest fit, bless me with such a portion of the comforts and conveniences of life, that thereby I may be enabled to go on more chearfully in my station, to serve thee better, to love thee more and more, and to admire more thy wonderful bounty and loving-kindness ; grant me health and  
strength,

\* Here recollect the blessings you enjoy, as health, assistance of friends, &c.



strength, and abilities suited to my circumstances, that I may honestly provide for myself; support me, that I fall not into extreme want; lay not more upon me, than thou shalt enable me to bear with patience; and supply the want of worldly blessings, by the comfort and support of thy good spirit, whereby I may be made perfect in every good work, become rich in faith, and an heir of thy kingdom. Grant, O Lord, that I may exercise all those christian graces and duties, which my present circumstances call for from me; let the sharpness of temporal wants put me upon considering what misery must attend the loss of my soul: let a sense of my poverty stir up eager desires after the true riches; and the less I have of this world, the more careful let me be to provide for the next.

Inspire me with diligence and industry in my calling, and when I have done my endeavour, make me to cast all my care upon thee; that neither the contempt, which vain persons wrongfully cast upon poverty, nor any evil which I may endure, may tempt me to any dishonest ways of living; but let me chuse rather to be poor than wicked, and to want any thing rather than thy blessing. For which end, cloath me with a meek, and quiet, and humble spirit, and a thorough contentedness in my present circumstances; that I may neither dare to repine at my own condition, nor envy the prosperity of others. Raise up my heart to look unto Jesus, who, to reconcile man to a state of poverty, chose to be born and live in a mean condition, enduring hunger, and thirst, and cold, and not having where to lay his head: that by his example I may be encouraged to contemn the world; and through faith and patience

tience having finished the race which thou hast set before me, I may be received into the joy of my Lord, for the sake of my Redeemer, thy ever-blessed Son, Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour.  
*Amen.*

*A Prayer under any injuries, abuses, or provocations.*

**O** God, whose beloved Son was evil treated, tempted, reviled, spit upon, mocked, and persecuted even unto death; and whose blessed disciples had also trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, and of severe bonds and imprisonments: what then am I that I should expect to escape the injuries, abuses and provocations of this world? therefore, Lord, such as my folly and miscarriage have made my enemies, enable me to appease, and to gain them to my friendship; and such as hate me wrongfully, pardon their sin, open their eyes, purify their minds, and convert their hearts unto thee; that they may see their fault, be reconciled to thee, O God! and then live, as much as in them lieth, in peace with all men, that we may at last live together in heaven. And for this end mortify, I beseech thee, in all of us, the carnal mind, which is at enmity against thee, and all those lusts, which war in our members, from whence wars and fightings arise; unite us all against the common enemy of our souls; and join all our hearts to thee, in thy true fear and love, that we may not meditate revenge, but study to be quiet; and this we humbly pray in the name of that great pattern of meekness, thy Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

*A Prayer*

*A Prayer for the use of one that is aged.*

**I** Adore thee, O Lord of life and glory; who art from everlasting to everlasting, and changeest not; beseeching thee to look graciously upon thy unworthy servant, whose hope is only in thine infinite mercy; by which my life hath been prolonged to old age, and which is able to make me eternally blessed. I thank thee for thy inconceivable love in the Lord Jesus, who hath given me such a solid and stedfast ground of hope, to support and strengthen my heart, when all the comforts of this life fail me: and I praise and magnify thy bounteous goodness for those innumerable blessings, which time after time thou hast bestowed upon me, from the beginning of my life till this present.

O my God, help me always to solace myself, now that the days are come wherein I have no pleasure, with a perpetual remembrance of thy past loving kindneses to me, and with those hopes which I have of thy endless love in the other world. And the more my outward senses decay, vouchsafe me the quicker and more lively sense in my heart of those good things which thou hast laid up there, for those that fear thee.

Preserve me from all discontented thoughts, and peevish passions. Make me an example unto others of holiness, discretion, temperance, gravity, peaceableness and patience, that so I may with the more authority be a teacher of good things, and my hoary head may be a crown of glory, being found in the ways of righteousness. O how comely a thing is judgment for grey hairs, and for ancient men to know counsel! Pardon me, good Lord, that I have made no better improvement of  
my

my time and experience, for the furnishing of my mind with wisdom, and with those virtues. Pardon all my negligences, and all my offences: and fill my heart with a comfortable sense of thy pardoning mercy in Christ Jesus; that having no other burthen but that of age, to oppress my spirit, I may rejoice in thee as long as I live; and at last lay myself down to rest in peace, and return my soul back unto thee chearfully, whensoever thou callest for it; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead, and of that glory, honour, and immortality, which thou hast graciously promised us by thy dear Son, my most blessed Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus, with whom I desire to live to give thee eternal praises.

*Amen.*

*A Prayer against the fear of death.*

**M**OST gracious God, since I am hastning on to the end of my life, let all my sins be done away by thy mercy and my faith and repentance, through the merits of Christ. Take from me all guilt, remove all fear, and give me patience during the rest of my life, that I may always stand ready to give a good account of my life unto thee; and that I may fight the good fight of faith with constancy and perseverance, and finish my course with joy, and never sleep in sin, nor lie down in sorrow and misery. Since the sentence of death is passed upon me, strip my soul of all fleshly affections, before it leaves my body; and dispose it to be of like mind and disposition with the holy angels, and beatified spirits; neither let me forget, that this is like to be the last trial, which thou wilt afford me,  
of

of renouncing my own will and resigning myself to thine, of shewing forth devotion of spirit, and all holy obedience, patience, faith, and humble confidence in thee; make me therefore watch for all opportunities of exercising the same, doing them diligently, as my last labour for immortality, and for securing thy everlasting mercy, through the merits of Jesus Christ, who died for me and all mankind. *Amen.*

*A Prayer for assistance at the hour of death.*

**O** Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, my only help in time of need; look graciously upon me, O Lord, and the more the outward man decayeth, strengthen me, I beseech thee, so much the more continually with thy grace and Holy Spirit in the inner man. Give me unfeigned repentance for all the errors of my life past, and stedfast faith in thy son Jesus, that my sins may be done away by thy mercy, and my pardon sealed in heaven, before I go hence and be no more seen. I know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with thee, and that if thou wilt, thou canst even yet raise me up, and grant me a longer continuance in this life. Yet, forasmuch as in all appearance the time of my departure draweth near, so fit and prepare me, I beseech thee, against the hour of death, that after my departure hence in peace, and in thy favour, my soul may be received into thine everlasting kingdom, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thine only Son, my Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

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